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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2016 Miami Beach Hispanic Heritage Awards Recognize LGBT Hispanic Police Officer, First Hispanic Mayor, The Miami Herald/el Nuevo Herald among others

Miami Beach, FL – The City of Miami Beach is proud to celebrate its cultural vibrancy and diversity by joining the national celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month through October 15, 2016. For the 14th consecutive year, Miami Beach will recognize the positive contributions made by unsung heroes who constitute an important part of the city and who contribute towards the collective strength, inclusion, and prosperity of the Hispanic community.

“This month, we honor Hispanics for enriching our community’s fabric and reflecting on our city’s rich Hispanic heritage,” states proclamation issued by Mayor Philip Levine declaring September 15, 2016 through October 15, 2016 as Hispanic Heritage Month in the City of Miami Beach. “Let us take pride in our unique vibrant history and recommit to a shared future of freedom, prosperity and opportunity for all.”

“As the nation celebrates our cultural heritage, Miami Beach highlights the great contributions of the exceptional Hispanic residents whose strong desire to live the American dream have yielded expanded opportunities for our neighbors, improved the quality of life, and secured the greater good of the overall community,” affirmed Miami Beach Hispanic Affairs Advisory Committee Chairman Alex Fernandez. “The selfless service of the Hispanic leaders and institutions we honor during this month reaffirm the American standard of service and the embrace of our City’s mission to provide excellent public service and safety to all who live, work, and play in our vibrant, tropical, and historic community.”

“Reflecting the progress of the nation and our city, for the first time ever, we call attention to the leaders who have broken the glass ceilings for minorities within the Hispanic community – leaders who have expanded opportunities for Hispanic women in elected office, Hispanic women in corporate America and journalism where men continue to dominate bylines, and LGBT Hispanics in public safety,” concluded Chairman Fernandez.

Following a competitive vetting of nominations from a cross-section of the community, the Miami Beach Hispanic Affairs Advisory Committee will honor the following individuals at the annual Hispanic Heritage Festival taking place on Friday, October 7, 2016, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at North Short Park, 501 72 Street, Miami Beach.

Hispanic Trailblazer Award

Former Miami Beach Mayor Matti Herrera Bower

Mayor Bower made history by becoming the City's first Hispanic woman elected to the City Commission and subsequently being the first Hispanic ever elected as the City's Mayor in 2007. Her illustrious public service career dates 40 years as president of various parent teach associations in Miami Beach. Through her story of perseverance, we are reminded that there was a time not that long ago in Miami Beach's history when the participation of the Hispanic community in city government was not welcomed. When frustrations boiled over in 1993 due to the underrepresentation of Hispanics in city-government, Mayor Bower stood before the City Commission and was instrumental in advocating for the creation of a municipal blue-ribbon taskforce which led to a fair electoral process, inclusive employment practices, opportunities for contracting, and ethnic parity in appointments to boards and committees. It is in Mayor Bower's character to fight for a fair and even playing field and this translated into every aspect of her public service. Thus, as a by-product of the policies advanced by Mayor Bower a social movement was cemented in Miami Beach that, to this day, continues to empower our Hispanic community.

Business Contributing to the Hispanic Community

The Miami Herald / el Nuevo Herald and Executive Team

With three Hispanic women in its executive team, one of them from Miami Beach, the Miami Herald / el Nuevo Herald have contributed towards breaking the corporate glass ceiling for Hispanics, especially, Hispanic women. In 2014, Ms. Alexandra Villoch became the first woman and the third Hispanic publisher of the Miami Herald since its first edition in 1903. With Ms. Mindy Marques Gonzalez as Executive Editor, the Miami Herald became the first major American newspaper with the positions of editor and publisher filled by Hispanic women. In speaking of Ms. Mindy Marques Gonzalez, the President of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists stated that, "Mindy not only represents the top layer of journalism leadership in the country, but is the only Latina editor of a large mainstream newspaper." Miami Beach resident, Ms. Myriam Marquez, also made history as the first woman and Hispanic to lead the Herald's opinion pages and later also rose to the rank of Executive Editor of the largest Spanish-language daily in the nation – el Nuevo Herald. This Hispanic-led media organization keeps a tireless eye on local government to ensure that residents are well informed on matters affecting their quality of life.

LGBT Hispanic Leader

Detective Juan Sanchez

Recognizing the great pain endured from the significant loss of lives resulting from the terrorist attack in Orlando targeting the Hispanic and LGBT communities, the Hispanic Affairs Committee believes it is proper timing to highlight the important contributions of a LGBT Hispanic Leader. Detective Juan Sanchez has served the Miami Beach Police Department since 1987. Over his nearly three decades of service, Detective Sanchez has been instrumental in ensuring that the LGBT community feel welcomed in Miami Beach as a city that embraces progress and unity. As MBPD's official LGBT Liaison, Detective Sanchez has served as a bridge between the community and law enforcement and ensuring safety and equal treatment. Detective Sanchez developed the Hate Crimes Reporting training, created the Transgender Interactions Standard Operating Procedures, and monitors the 24/7 operation of MBPD's Hate Crimes Hotline providing proper direction to callers. Detective Sanchez has been an invaluable asset building partnerships to address tension and offer suggestions for resolution as exemplified by his altruistic work when he quickly obtained resources for a 17 year old teenager about to be kicked out of his home for being openly gay.

Hispanic Public Safety Personnel

Captain Enrique Doce, Miami Beach Police Department

Through his respectful and calm demeanor, Captain Doce has earned the trust and respect of the North Beach community. In the true spirit of public service, Captain Doce is always available to assist residents when they call regardless if he is on vacation or on a personal day off. Rather than delegating matters to subordinates, Captain Doce has been known to personally walk the community with residents and business owners for which he has been credited with having a direct impact on curbing issues related to prostitution, drugs, public intoxication, and homelessness in residential areas. Captain Doce has developed the reputation of a stellar public servant who goes beyond the call of duty to assist the community through the proper avenues even when the request is outside the scope of his duties.

Captain Adonis Garcia, Miami Beach Fire Department

Captain Garcia is the personification of Miami Beach's finest – the unsung men and women who everyday put the lives of others ahead of their own. In his true nature of service, Captain Garcia served as president of International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 1510. History will show as fortuitous that Captain Garcia was present at the Budget Advisory Committee meeting of August 27th, 2009 representing his union when Committee Member Antonio M. Hernandez went into cardiac arrest. Captain Garcia immediately recognized the symptoms and without any hesitation or equipment placed his own life in danger to provide CPR to Mr. Hernandez. While Captain Garcia was not official duty when he saved Mr. Hernandez's life, he exemplified the very best that the Miami Beach Fire Department has to offer.

Distinguished Hispanic Community Member

Gustavo Briand, South Beach Charity Angels

Mr. Briand has been known to reflect the generosity and compassion of our Miami Beach citizenry. He is a small business owner who founded South Beach Charity Angels. Mr. Briand conducts monthly karaoke parties at the Ronald MacDonald House in Miami at which children and their families participate in a night of karaoke fun that helps them lift their spirits and grants them a temporary reprieve from the serious medical treatments they undergo at Jackson Hospital. Mr. Briand also launched a national anti-bullying campaign. Mr. Briand's positive outlook on life and his giving heart are truly an inspiration to his international clientele and neighbors.

Adult Contributing to the Hispanic Youth

Elaine Soffer Siegel

Ms. Soffer Siegel is a member of the Miami Beach Parks and Recreation Committee. She has earned the respect of Miami Beach parents for her advocacy to ensure a smooth transition of the Teen Club from its 21st Street location to the Scott Rakow Youth Center. Ms. Soffer Siegel has demonstrated her passionate dedication to safeguarding quality recreational activities and facilities for children who live in Miami Beach.

Hispanic Educator – Early Childhood Development

Zorilien Riveron, Rain Drop Academy

As Director of the Rain Drop Academy, Ms. Riveron has transformed the quality of pre-school curriculum for underprivileged children enrolled in the program. Today, Rain Drop Academy offers pre-reading, mathematical foundations, and other early childhood development skills that prepare toddlers to successfully enter the pre-kindergarten programs available at Miami-Dade County Public Schools. As a result of Ms. Riveron's leadership over the past three years, the certified teachers at Rain Drop Academy offer a thematic and engaging curriculum which has successfully provided low income families the opportunity to have their children attend a high quality child care center within their means.

Hispanic Educator – Higher Education

Sylvia Carro, Miami Beach Senior High School

Ms. Carro is a Hispanic educator who has made a positive impact on the lives of her students through academic lessons and examples of responsible citizenship taught both inside and outside the classroom setting. Ms. Carro has been a positive influence on the lives of her students offering free weekend tutoring, volunteering in community clean-ups, and lending a helping hand by seeking housing assistance for some of her most vulnerable students. Ms. Carro has been an educator with the Miami-Dade County Public School System since 1999 teaching Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses at Miami Beach Senior High School since the 2009-10 school year.

Social Service Provider

Unidad of Miami Beach

Unidad of Miami Beach is regarded as the premier not-for-profit organization addressing the many needs of Hispanic community, especially the elderly, residing in the City of Miami Beach. Unidad's membership constitutes Hispanics facing the challenges of integrating into a new and competitive culture. The organization prides itself in providing essential social services such as immigration, legal services, training and employment, housing, and health counselling. From its recently inaugurated Senior Activity Center located at 7251 Collins Avenue, Unidad of Miami Beach provides over 1,000 meals on a monthly basis in addition to special activities and events. As Miami Beach continues to grow as a worldwide attraction, Unidad of Miami Beach maintains an important focus on the needs of our underserved population which are important of our diverse community.

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