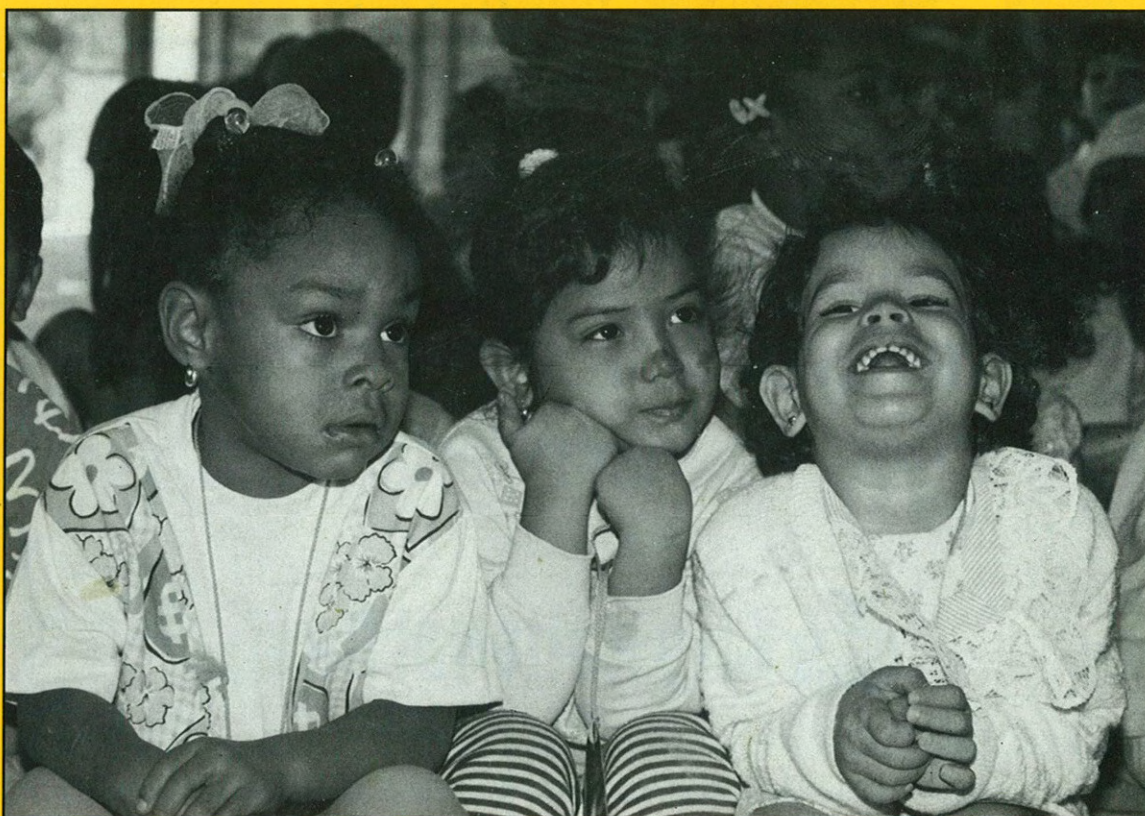


Winter 1994

Tropical TOPICS



The Education of Our Children

The Quarterly Magazine of The Junior League of Miami, Inc.

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"The Junior League of Miami, Inc. is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism and to improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable."

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Tropical TOPICS

The Education of Our Children

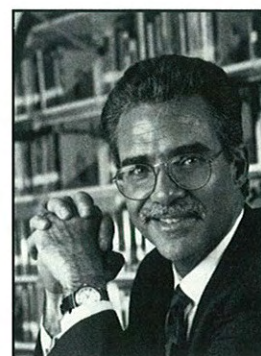
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Parental Dogma

No, we have dogs," we always answer when the inevitable question comes up – "do you have children?"

"Oh, dogs are great," the person who has asked nods knowingly as he backs away, far too polite to ask what he really wants to know – "why dogs, not kids?"

It's OK to ask, honestly. Mike and I love kids – they just haven't happened for us and we're content with that (and sometimes, when we have young visitors, relieved!), lavishing what meager parental skills we have on our three canine children.

In a lot of ways, having dogs is a lot like having human children. For example, we are prone to brag at the drop of a hat. There is 12-year old Bear. When Bear was young, he was magnificent. Now a little wobbly on his hind legs, he is still a mighty tail wagger who performs a convoluted canine cha-cha every time the Milk Bone box appears.

And then there is Grizzly, Bear's nephew. Solid black like the old man. Beautiful. Joyous. Devoted. At six, Grizzly is at his prime. He smiles all the time – even when the Milk Bone box is empty.

And bay Merlin. Totally content to curl his long Doberman limbs into a little ball in my lap. (I know he will want to do this even when he is full grown and weighs 100 pounds!!)

These are my children Which brings me back to one of my "pet" (sorry!) theories. Having dogs is a lot like having children. Think about it. You have to house break them. They fuss when you put Dog Chow in their bowls (they would rather be eating chocolate). When you take your eyes off of them for one second they get into the garbage. They love to terrorize the neighbor's prize



Persian. They freak you out when they track muddy paws all over your clean floors. They always wait until you are on the phone to get into mischief. And when you get upset with them they look at you with soulful eyes and a tentative tail wag which always makes you want to smile and hug them rather than scold them!

Now, I realize that dogs are really much easier than children. First of all, they can't talk back. Secondly, if they get out of line, you just give them a good yank on their choke collar. (I do have one friend who wishes she could use this method on her rambunctious seven year old). But I do believe that many parental skills are the same for both dogs and kids.

You have to be firm and consistent. You have to repeat lessons over and over. You have to be patient when they mess up. You have to punish bad behavior and be ready with lavish praise when they are good. You have to admire the gifts they give you (even the dead squirrels). You have to calm them down when they get excited and reassure them when they get scared.

I know that Mike and I are the most important things in our dogs's lives. They live to make us happy and fear our displeasure. This is also the case with human children who have conscientious parents.

When I was growing up my number one fear was making my mother unhappy. I still shake when I think about

the day I accidentally hit my second grade teacher in the back with a milk-sopped napkin while aiming for the class pest sitting across from me in the lunch room. Being sent to the principal was bad enough, but then I had to face ... MOM. Yikes!

My theory was confirmed recently when I asked my nine year old friend Mark what he liked to do when he wasn't at school. "Read," he said, glancing over at his mother who was listening to our conversation, "do homework". "No, really, Mark," I encouraged, "what do you like to do when you're not doing homework?" Glancing over again at his mom, he blurted out quickly, "I like to read comic books – the Super Villains are the coolest." "Do these villains scare you?" I asked. "No way," Mark tells me, looking like he thinks I'm totally lame, "they always die in the end because they're bad and they deserve it!" "Well," I'm really struggling now, "what does scare you?" One more glance over to his mom and Mark says softly, hoping she won't hear, "I get scared when Mom yells." "Me, too," I tell him conspiratorially, "I'm 41 years old and I still get scared that my mom is going to yell!"

It is the lucky animal or child who has parents who care enough to balance love with discipline. Just like a terrified pitbull, which is abused and provoked to fight for its life, a child, who never learns the joys of pleasing a caring parent, can grow up to be just as vicious. ■

Jane

Jane Chadwick
President
Junior League of Miami, Inc.



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1993 - 1994 Community Commitment

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY/WINN DIXIE HOPE LODGE CENTER: We are underwriting the construction cost of the volunteer/staff office and implementing a volunteer training program for this facility which provides free care for patients undergoing cancer treatment.

DADE PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND - IMPACT II: Volunteers are helping to organize a conference for teachers to share proven ideas, and to recognize teaching excellence.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH FOR THE HOMELESS: In conjunction with the Salvation Army and the Miami Rescue Mission, League members are assisting in providing programs to enhance self-esteem and foster independence.

FAIRCHILD TROPICAL GARDEN'S "ORDER OUT OF CHAOS": Volunteers are developing an interpretative trail and materials for the Hurricane Andrew exhibit and are also incorporating instructional lessons on hurricanes in the Gardens' curriculum materials for teachers and students.

GUARDIAN AD-LITEM: Our members are assisting The Foster Care Drift program by focusing primarily on cases that have languished in the foster care system for years due to paperwork problems, lack of follow-up or legal technicalities. The volunteers are reviewing files, obtaining needed materials and acting as advocates in the Civil Court system.

HURRICANE RELIEF: Continuing already-established League hurricane efforts, our volunteers are working to expand hurricane education programs for children, migrant workers and the elderly. We are also researching long-term projects and assisting with the development of the South Dade Transitional Housing Project.

INFORMED FAMILIES: The goal of Informed Families is to reduce the risk of substance abuse among youth. League members are recruiting and training other Dade County volunteers for placement in Informed Families' projects.

INN TRANSITION: Inn Transition provides long-term housing and resources to women with children who have been victims of domestic violence. Inn Transition volunteers—in conjunction with Metro-Dade County professionals — ensure that women receive personal, vocational, and financial counseling, as well as child care and access to other services designed to help change their lives. As the League's flagship project, Inn Transition is the first project of its kind in South Florida and serves as a model to other organizations nationwide.

LIZ CLAIBORNE FAMILY VIOLENCE PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN: Junior League volunteers, along with governmental agencies and community organizations, assisted in the coordination of several Fall events toward increasing public awareness of domestic violence. This collaborative effort focuses on the implementation of a domestic violence educational program within Dade County Public Schools.

"MIAMI: THE MAGIC CONTINUES": League members are producing an up-to-date version of our 1981 award-winning film, "Miami, The Magic City." Miami's archaeological, architectural and social heritages are explored in this film slated to premiere in 1994.

NATIONAL SOCIETY TO PREVENT BLINDNESS: Our volunteers are assisting the Southeast Florida Region to initiate a Preschool Vision Screening Program for over 9,000 preschool children (ages 3-5) in Dade County. Volunteers will screen children and administer follow-up tests.

SOUTH DADE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT: In coalition with the South Miami Heights Community Development Corporation, the Stein Gerontological Institute (a division of the Miami Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged at Douglas Gardens), and the University of Miami School of Architecture's Center for Urban and Community Design, we are planning and implementing an inter-generational living complex on a 20-acre site, adjacent to the Caribbean Elementary School in South Dade.



I loved school as a child. When I was sick I was more distressed about missing school than about being ill. So to pass the time, I would line up any inanimate objects that I could find (dolls, stuffed toys, bottles, my mother's high-heeled shoes), read to

them and otherwise pretend that school was in session.

As a product of public and parochial schools, and having worked in both settings, I am aware of the many differences between the two. Now that my husband and I are on the verge of becoming first-time parents, the question of what type of schooling we will choose for our children has surfaced more than once.

On one hand, I do believe in the fundamental values and ideals of public education, as espoused in this issue by Dade County Public Schools (DCPS) Superintendent Visiedo, and by DCPS School Board member Janet MacAliley at a League meeting late last year. But then, I wonder: If the public school system is as great as they say, why would people like my mother-in-law, who worked as an DCPS administrator for over 30 years until she retired two years ago, send both her children (now in their late twenties

and early thirties) to private school from day one? Could it be that even 20 - 25 years ago the public school system was falling short of its ideals? To say nothing of the violence and insubordination that is widespread in today's schools.

At some private schools where tuition costs more than at some colleges and universities, teachers I know often comment that the students are not at all grounded in reality. My teacher friends suggest that coming from a very financially secure family may give some a warped view of what life in the real world is all about.

Whatever route my husband and I choose for our children's formal education, nothing will be as important as the "education" provided for them at home, namely the high morals and values that are, in my opinion, worth more than any amount of education ("book learning" as my grandmother used to say) or wealth that a person may have. ■



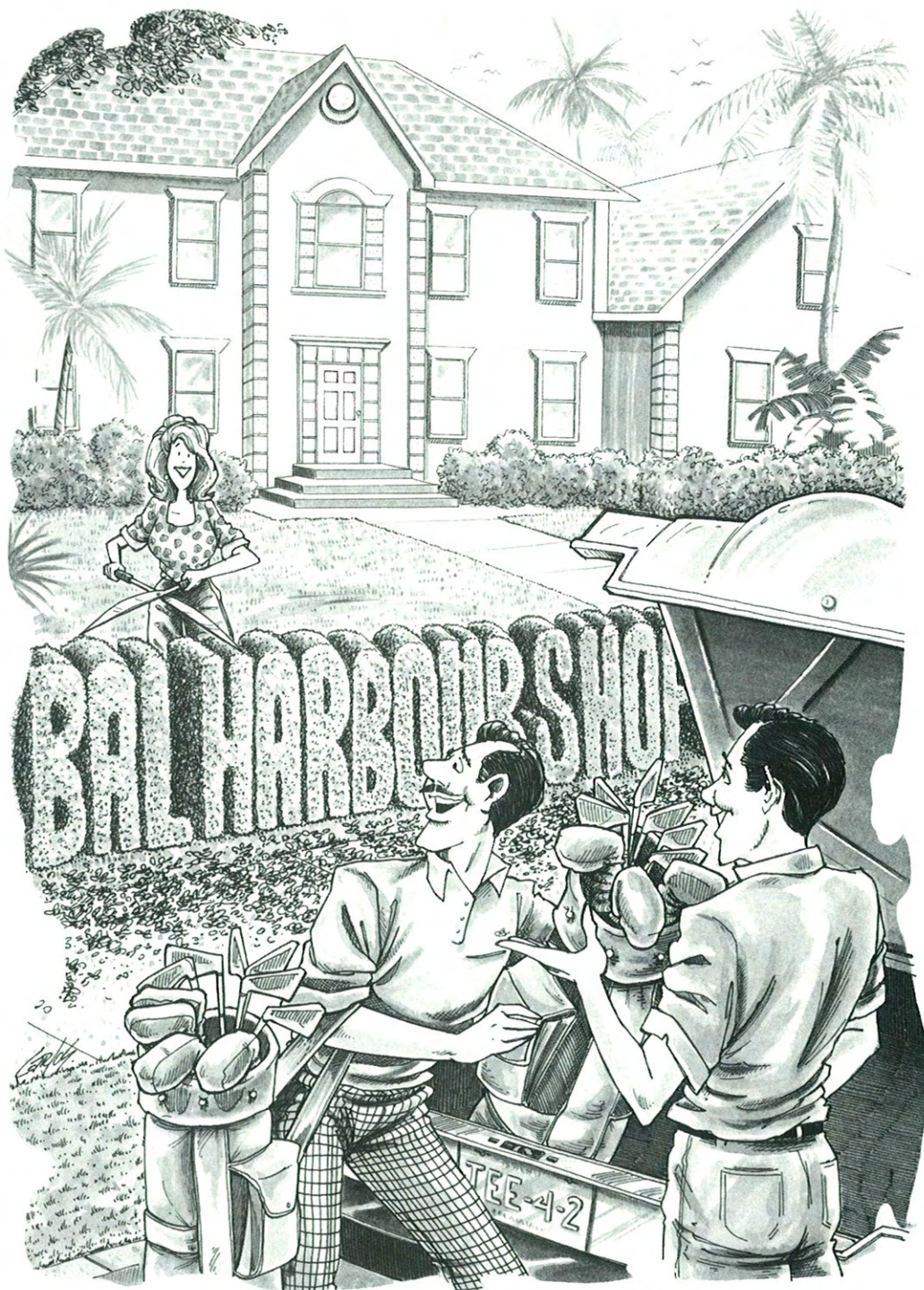
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Thanks from Winn-Dixie Hope Lodge

Thank you for being a "celebrity" at this year's Celebrity Bagger's Day [October 29, 1993]. All your hard work and efforts made this event a great success!

We were able to raise funds for the American Cancer Society Winn-Dixie Hope Lodge Center in Miami, where cancer patients can stay while they are undergoing treatment.

What can we say, we had a blast getting to know all of you and we hope you had an extra special evening as well. Where else can you have so much fun while working so hard towards our goal in the fight against cancer?

We hope that your participation for next year's event is, as they say, "In The Bag"! It was a real pleasure working with you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sincerely,

Maggie Abril Gomez
Terina Llano

American Cancer Society,
Dade County Unit

Dade Public Education Fund

Thank you for giving of your Saturday to help kick off the Fourth Annual Impact II Idea Expo on October 23 at the Sheraton River House Hotel.

Your opening remarks helped to set the stage for a very successful Expo. The more than 300 teachers who were in attendance gave evidence to the importance that Dade County teachers place upon the Impact II program. In addition, the network of educators who believe that sharing ideas is one sure method of improving education continues to grow each year.

The Junior League has played an important role in the success of the Impact II Expo over the past several years. The time and energy given by the committee to the Expo's preparation is invaluable to our staff. And the committee's assistance on the day of the Expo is an integral part of the success of the day.

We also appreciated your help in

judging the displays. It was not an easy job to do since there were so many innovative and creative displays.

Once again we thank you and the Junior League for your involvement in the Impact II program, and look forward to seeing you at one of the DPEP's upcoming events in the near future.

Linda Lecht

Executive Director

Domestic Violence Campaign

I want to personally thank you for participating in our unveiling event and for your continued efforts on behalf of family violence victims and advocates throughout Miami. The Junior League's leadership role in making Inn Transition a reality for women who are striving to break the cycle of family violence is a model for organizations throughout the country.

As a team we've demonstrated the value of public/private partnerships that make the best use of our combined human and financial resources. Bringing together business, government and social and cultural agencies, we've created a model for a new way of addressing our country's most critical health problem.

Again, thank you for all that you have done to fight the crime of family violence which impacts all our lives.

Jerome Chazen, Chairman

Liz Claiborne, inc.

Art in Public Places Trust

On behalf of the Metro-Dade Art in Public Places Trust we want to thank you for helping to make the Domestic Violence Awareness Rally event a tremendous success.

The event was held at Miami-Dade Community College - Wolfson Campus on October 9, 1993, and was attended by actress/model Lauren Hutton, emceed by Michele Gillen, with speakers from the State legislature, State Attorney's Office, the County Commission, the judicial system and social service agencies.

The individual participation and number of community and agency groups that attended was truly astounding.

Raising public awareness through a powerful visual arts campaign and publicizing the Domestic Violence hotline number and services available were the goals. Based upon the level of participation and the amount of phone calls generated seeking and offering help, the effort was an overwhelming triumph.

Thank you for endorsing this event, we appreciate your support in helping to make a positive difference for our community.

Vivian Donnell Rodriguez,

Executive Director

Art in Public Places

Sharon Socol, Committee Chair

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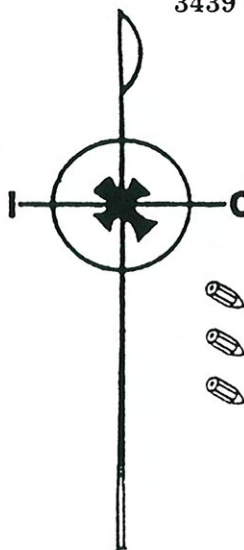
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Resourcemobile II Hits Dade's Roads

By Carmen Morrina

Licensed family day care providers got some much needed assistance late last year when the second of two Resourcemobiles designed to provide them with in-home training and support services hit the road. More than three years ago, the first Resourcemobile rolled on to Dade's streets complete with books, puzzles, toys, puppets and the latest child development equipment—all in a self-contained classroom capable of accommodating a driver, a child care specialist, a family care provider and up to five children.

Each van travels throughout Dade County to the homes of some forty child care providers, helping them to tailor an educational program to meet the specific needs of children under their care. "The family child care providers value their Resourcemobile training and actively seek out experiences which will improve their skills with children," says Rachel Blechman, an attorney with

Holland & Knight, who serves as the President of Resourcemobile, Inc. Thanks to the curriculum support provided, the Resourcemobiles are more than just a toy lending library.

Participating child care providers have already shown marked improvements. The training and support services received, especially in the disadvantaged pockets of our community, have helped families foster interactive techniques necessary for the child's positive growth. Often, a provider does not have access to the equipment and materials necessary to ensure an enriching learning environment. "The equipment and materials help family child care providers give services that would otherwise be out of their economic reach," adds Pernella Burke, Director of the Metro-Dade Human Resources' Child Development Services Division.

Resourcemobiles I & II operate Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and visit each home ap-

proximately once every four weeks, for thirty minutes to an hour, depending on the needs of the provider. At each stop, the County's early childhood educator conducts a brief developmentally appropriate learning activity with the provider and the children being cared for. More importantly, the provider receives free educational material, including a newsletter and training seminar, designed to enhance her/his individual programs.

Resourcemobile is an innovative public/private partnership between Metropolitan Dade County and Resourcemobile, Inc., a collaborative effort of the Junior League of Miami, the Kiwanis Club of Dade County; the National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Miami Section and the Dade Community Foundation, with the guidance and support from Miami-Dade Community College's North Campus Resource and Referral Center. The concept has received much national attention, winning various awards including the National Association of Counties Award of Excellence. ■

Junior League of Miami member Carmen Morrina works with the Metro-Dade Department of Human Resources. She has a master's degree in Public Administration.

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A Community at Risk

This article is not about education and graduation rates but about juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime, and VISION.

by David H. Brown

The high degree of correlation between juvenile delinquency and failure in school is more than accidental.

Let's take a moment and study this statement. Isn't it logical that juvenile delinquency and school failure correlate, delinquency is failure - a failure to do what duty or the law requires. Juvenile delinquency is a failure to follow the laws, rules and social mores established by a society as a standard for behavior. Failure in school can be measured in two ways, academically and socially.

Authorities agree that crime and delinquent behavior result from the individual's inability to cope with his/her environment. Stress and frustration causing anti-social acts results from many conditions in our society. Individual social adjustment and economic self-sufficiency are dependent upon an adequate education in our society. Any obstacle in the way of that education increases the

likelihood of criminal and delinquent behavior.

Between the ages of six and seventeen, the environment in which our children live and are regularly judged is their school. Yes, they are also a part of their family and society as a whole, but school plays one of the most important

ing skills, a child is seriously handicapped, or actually prevented from acquiring information and learning the occupational and social skills necessary to succeed.

Eighty percent of all learning takes place in the visual system. If the visual system is not fully functioning, the learn-

Eighty percent of all learning takes place in the visual system. If the visual system is not fully functioning, the learning process cannot be accomplished, the child does not have the necessary tools to achieve and the child will have difficulty reading and writing.

ing process cannot be accomplished, the child does not have the necessary tools to achieve and the child will have difficulty reading and writing.

From the poor reader comes the slow reader — the nonachiever in the

roles in their development. If they are unsuccessful in school, they are having difficulty coping with their environment and therefore are likely to be behavior problems.

What causes a child to have difficulty copying with his/her environment? The primary function of a child's environment while in school is to learn. Reading is the most basic tool to scholastic achievement. Without adequate read-

classroom. Due to a lack of adequate tools, it is too difficult for the child to experience success in the classroom. School means failure. The child might be labeled as slow, stupid or dumb, when in reality they may have the ability, but lack the adequate tools — good vision. The child becomes bored, restless and disruptive. If professionals are not alert to this "call for help" behavior, the child may be punished for his or her unruli-

ness or worse, completely ignored. Discipline is demeaning, so the student may avoid school and risk truancy. This condition can snowball as time goes on to the point that the child begins to hate school, even if he/she has the ability. From partial and occasional truancy to partial dropout, to brushes with disciplinarians (teachers, parents, the school principal), to brushes with the law. Now an official juvenile delinquent, compounded by anger and hostility emerges. This hostility and revolt commits the child to a losing battle with his/her environment.

The emerging adult therefore is not socially well adjusted and is likely not to become economically self-sufficient, because these two skills are dependent upon an adequate education.

"STAY IN SCHOOL." The slick Madison Avenue advertising campaign hoped to achieve increased graduation rates in our nation's high schools. However, the only thing this campaign really achieves is a memorable slogan. All the Madison Avenue hype in the world is not going to help the frustrated, angry child achieve a higher level in the classroom when he/she does not have the tools to accomplish the job.

This article is not about education and graduation rates but about juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime, and VISION.

In the last presidential campaign, the media focused on the candidates' ability to develop a vision for the future of this nation. A child will never be able to serve as a leader of this country, this state, or this city if they do not have the one tool which will allow them to succeed - the ability to see. They will never be able to develop their vision as a leader. They are likely to not even become a leader.

We speak about equality, and how unfair it is that some have more opportunities than others, whether perceived or real. When a child cannot see in the classroom the same as his/her classmates - there is no equality in this equation. The child with poor sight does not have the same opportunities as those

A child will never be able to serve as a leader of this country, this state, or this city if they do not have the one tool which will allow them to succeed—the ability to see.

who can see clearly. It would be truly miraculous if the child with poor sight could achieve at the same level as their classmates who can see. In baseball, they say "If he can't see it, he can't hit it." In the classroom, we say "If he/she can't see it, he/she can't learn it."

Fortunately, there are answers to these problems and Prevent Blindness Florida, Southeast Region is not only addressing the problems, but providing solutions. One in twenty preschool children have some type of vision disorder. At the preschool age, a child's body is what some might term as "plastic," capable of being molded and corrected. In some forms of vision problems this is definitely the case. As an example, a child with amblyopia that is detected at age three has a potentially shorter noninvasive correction period than the child who is not detected until age six. The most obvious solution is to screen children as early as possible to correct

No child should be deprived of his or her maximum ability to see, to achieve, to learn and to grow with the world around them. Failure to provide proper eye care neglects an area which, by its very neglect restricts human behavior and human potential.

vision disorders, and Prevent Blindness Florida, Southeast Region is doing just that in association with the Junior League of Miami, Inc.

Other solutions involve continued screening throughout school and a follow-up referral program that helps those children who fail a screening. Prevent Blindness Florida, Southeast Region in cooperation with Dade County Public Schools and the Dade Optometric Association takes this task a step further. We provide free full eye examinations and glasses to those children who fail the vision screening and whose families cannot afford to pay the costs associated with proper eye care. This program, the Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund, Inc., was established in memory of Heiken, a local optometrist. Since the pilot program began last Fall, it has assisted over 150 children in five months. These children can now see just as well as their classmates and have a chance to succeed academically.

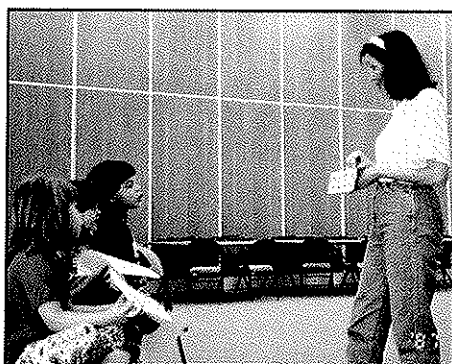
Our goal is to provide the chance for all children to see, and therefore learn the best that they can. I am reminded of an experience that was relayed to me by a teacher who took a student from her classroom to an optometrist. This child was doing poorly in school and her eyesight was terrible. After being fitted with her new glasses, the child quietly left the doctors office. However, the moment they walked outside, the child began screaming wildly. The teacher was horrified as passersby looked at the child screaming at the top of her lungs. The teacher asked the child, "What's the matter? Are you hurt? Are you in pain.?" The child stopped screaming long enough to say, "No, I'm not hurt, and I feel no pain." The teacher then asked, "Then what is the matter?" The child gleefully replied, "I can see!"

Besides the fact that this child was very happy to fully experience vision and the wonders of the world around her, she also had a major obstacle moved out of her way. This child is better equipped to cope with her environment. This child is more likely to become

(Continued on page 15)

Focus on Pre-School Vision Screening

by Karin D. Wherry



Nancy Douglas reads a group of children for screening by going over the shapes.

Under the watchful eye of Prevent Blindness Florida, the Junior League of Miami's Pre-School Vision Screening Program Committee has been training volunteers to identify some vision problems in pre-school children, ages three to five. David Brown, Executive Director, National Society to Prevent Blindness, has worked closely with Gail McCoy, chairman of the League's committee, to incorporate the outstanding efforts of the Junior League of Miami in detecting potential vision problems in young children.

Specifically, committee members have trained volunteers to conduct distance visual acuity exercises designed to highlight amblyopia and strabismus. Amblyopia (lazy eye) is a condition of decreased visual acuity in an eye that appears normal; an eye with amblyopia has an impairment of vision without any apparent disease. Both eyes may be far-

sighted (hyperopia) or near-sighted (myopia) but one eye is generally worse.

Treatment involves patching the good eye to force the use of the weaker one, the use of corrective glasses, or a combination of both. Strabismus describes eyes that are not straight or properly aligned due to a muscle imbalance. Treatment aimed at straightening the eyes may involve the use of glasses, an eye patch, eye drops or surgery.

The goal of the pre-school screening program is to catch these problems early while they can be easily treated," Brown emphasizes. "The earlier that corrective action is commenced before a child

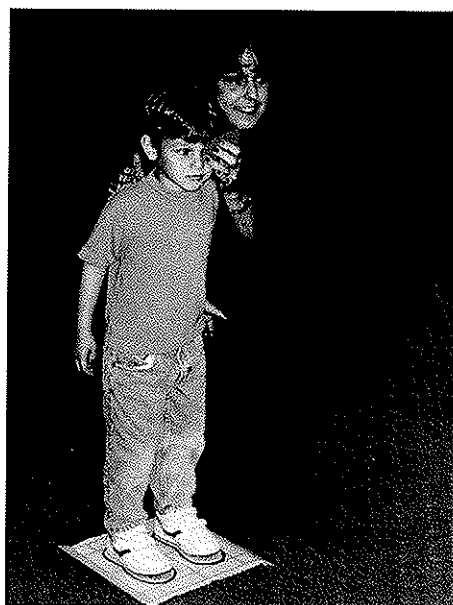


Angel McAlpin - hands a child a coloring sheet after the screening. Eye box shown on table.

reaches age 8, the shorter and more effective the treatment."

According to McCoy the committee has so far trained about 150 volunteers in various organizations throughout Miami, including the Delta Gamma sorority at the University of Miami, the Kendall United Methodist Church, the Coral Gables Congregational Church, and students at Miami Beach High School, who screened children in the Head Start Program. Volunteers attend a three-hour certification training session utilizing a manual and demonstrative aids with lectures; and must pass a written multiple choice test before they are qualified to conduct vision screening exercises.

During the vision test, each child stands ten feet from a light box which illuminates a symbol chart with shapes of apples, houses, squares and circles. The child covers one eye with a paper or plastic occluder while reading various



Gail McCoy screens a 4 year old covering one eye at a time.

lines on the chart. "In order to make the experience fun for the children, we place 'magic feet' footprints on which the child stands during the test. We tell them that we are going to play an eye game of "pirate" where we will cover one eye with a patch for a few minutes," McCoy explains. She adds that "the volunteers try to make the screening experience a pleasant one by offering encouragement and positive reinforcement throughout the exercise."

Four volunteers are necessary to conduct a prescreening session. One person discusses the eye chart and symbols to each child so that they both understand the association that each child makes with each symbol, thus minimizing any misunderstanding when the child reads the chart. A second individual stands with the child during testing to ensure proper position. The third person points out the symbols on the chart for the child to read. Finally, the

fourth volunteer records and sends the results to the Prevent Blindness Florida office.

"If a child's test results reflect a vision problem, Prevent Blindness Florida sends the child's parents a letter with the results and suggests that the child visit a professional eye care specialist. The volunteers do not provide treatment to remedy any vision impairment," explained McCoy.

The cooperative effort has been mutually beneficial for both Prevent Blindness Florida and for the Junior League of Miami in pursuit of healthy sight for children. McCoy enthusiastically states that "this placement has been personally satisfying and worthwhile to the community. It has been gratifying to be able to detect a child's vision problem early so that he/she may have proper treatment for a lifetime of good sight." Brown echoes McCoy's enthusiasm adding that "the Junior League's participa-

tion in pre-school screening has greatly enhanced Prevent Blindness Florida's ability to educate the community about the importance of early detection and treatment of vision impairments." With an eye on the future, children can see what the world has to offer. ■

Third-year League member Karin D. Wherry is an assistant United States Attorney. A Florida native who enjoys traveling, she holds degrees from Rollins College and the University of Florida Law School.

(Continued from page 13)

economically self-sufficient, will be less frustrated in the classroom, and thus will be less likely to become involved in criminal behavior.

No child should be deprived of his or her maximum ability to see, to achieve, to learn and to grow with the world around them. Failure to provide proper eye care neglects an area which, by its very neglect restricts human behavior and human potential. We, as a community at risk cannot afford these restrictions any longer. We must provide every child the tools needed to acquire information and develop the skills necessary to succeed.

If you or your company would like to know more about the programs offered by Prevent Blindness Florida, Southeast Region, or would like to become a Prevent Blindness volunteer, write, call or fax us at:

*Prevent Blindness Florida,
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David A. Brown is the Southeast Regional Director for Prevent Blindness Florida.

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Summerbridge Miami

by Kathy Moore

It's nice to know that there is a program in Miami that focuses on helping at-risk children before they are affected by the adverse influences around them. Summerbridge Miami is a program that was instituted two years ago at Ransom Everglades School. The effects in Miami are yet to be seen, but the national program began in San Francisco 15 years ago and has since seen 92% of its graduates move on to strong academic high schools and top colleges and universities around the country.

The Summerbridge Miami program encourages and prepares 75 bright, motivated Dade County public and private school students for entrance into, and success at strong middle schools, high schools and colleges. Over 80% of these students

are minorities who are victims of low-income households, language barriers and limited educational support. Tagged as "underachievers," these students struggle with disciplinary problems and face turbulent home lives of drugs, violence and

abuse. It is hoped that eventually these students will act as role models for their peers. Another objective is to encourage and prepare outstanding high school and college students from Ransom

With mottos like "On Track and Nothing Can Stop Us Now," "Learning is Fun," and "Dedication is the Price of Excellence," Summerbridge's emphasis is on hard work and spirit, while encouraging students to give everything their best shot, to take themselves seriously, and to improve their self-esteem.

Everglades, Miami High, Brown University, Duke University and other schools to enter the field of education. Nationwide, 64% of the college students that serve as Summerbridge teachers have gone on to pursue teaching careers upon graduating from college.

Summerbridge Miami is a comprehensive, tuition-free two-

year program which includes rigorous six-week academic summer sessions, tutorials during the school year, Saturday morning programs, and year-round advocacy for students and their parents. Aside from math and science, offerings include less traditional classes in Improv-o-rama and Cartoon Animation. Summerbridge is not all work though; there are field trips to museums, an annual Everglades camping trip, and trip to cultural and sporting events. With mottos like "On Track and Nothing Can Stop Us Now," "Learning is Fun," and "Dedication is the Price of Excellence," Summerbridge's emphasis is on hard work and spirit, while encouraging students to give everything their best shot, to take themselves seriously, and to improve their self-esteem.

Summerbridge is a non-profit organization funded by private, tax-deductible donations. It costs approximately \$1,200 to sponsor a student for one year, a small price when compared to that of some government-sponsored juvenile



programs. For example, at a recent Junior League of Miami meeting, Judge Tom Peterson indicated that Dade County spends \$75,000 for each child that is sent either to jail or to a juvenile correctional center. So, for a mere fraction of that amount, a child can be headed off long before being affected by adverse circumstances. What a small price to pay to have a responsible, well-balanced young adult with good self-

esteem and leadership qualities as part of our community! What a terrific program for Miami! ■

Kathy Moore is a recent transfer to the Junior League of Miami. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Florida State University.

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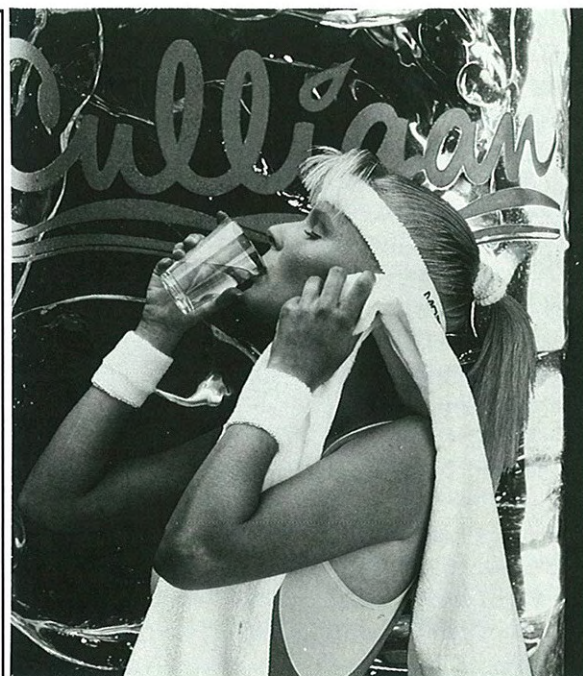
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A Window into the World of Dade County Public Schools

by Octavio J. Visiedo, Superintendent
Dade County Public Schools

Our public schools continue to distinguish themselves as belonging to one of the finest school districts in the nation. That is a minor miracle in itself when one considers how devastating last year's effects of Hurricane Andrew were, particularly in South Dade where many of our schools were severely damaged. But through a reconstruction effort we call "Project Phoenix," those schools are rising from the ruins.

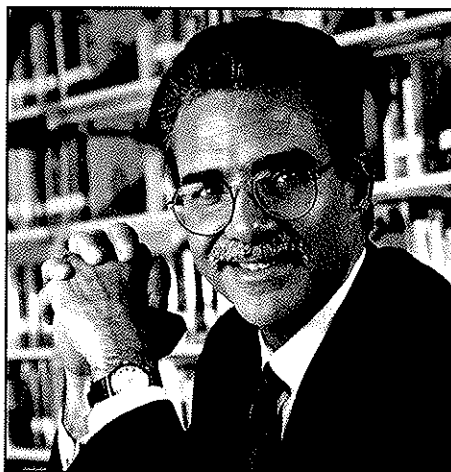
That means we in the public schools can turn our attention once again to our basic mission: making the best education possible available to every child in Dade County.

We believe we are doing just that. During this 1993-94 school year, we are dramatically revising our classroom instruction — with the objective being measurable, meaningful improvement in student achievement.

Key components in our plan include greater emphasis on mathematics and language skills, algebra as a required course for high school graduation, and regularly measuring students' practical application of knowledge. These will be major steps toward higher academic standards for our youngsters. I have personally emphasized to each and every school principal that this method of improving student achievement is our number-one priority.

In this way — based on an approach called "competency-based curriculum" — we will improve students' ability to think critically, incorporating the facts and knowledge they have acquired in the classroom.

This year, each public school in Dade County is also required to develop and implement a state-mandated "school im-



Octavio J. Visiedo

provement plan" based on the opinions of school administrators, teachers, parents, business people and other community members.

For some years, we have been widely recognized as one of the most innovative and progressive school districts in the nation. Whenever a journal such as *Time* magazine prepares an article on school reform, its writers contact us to find out what is happening in Dade's public schools.

This year, rebuilding in the hurricane's aftermath has let us accelerate progress toward providing a number of "full service" schools — schools that offer youngsters a longer school day as well as a number of health and social services. We know that many children need such facilities. In Dade County, we can show the rest of the nation how it's done.

Elsewhere, with the encouragement and assistance of the business community, we have begun a program called "the 13th year" which provides our high-school graduates the specific skills they need once they have acquired a job. And,

since our community is uniquely multiethnic and multicultural, we have also launched the development of a district-wide multicultural curriculum in our classrooms.

Because pre-kindergarten classes help prepare children to achieve success in school, it is a personal goal of mine that all Dade's elementary schools will have pre-kindergarten programs. Our vast array of "magnet" programs — offering intensive studies in specialized fields in everything from pre-medicine to the fine arts — is, in my opinion, the most extensive and exciting magnet program in the United States.

I hope the Junior League of Miami will increase its interest in, and involvement with, Dade's public schools. Without a well-educated upcoming generation, this community — and this nation — will be lost. Literate and capable young people assure two crucial results: that the freedom we treasure so dearly in this country will be well understood and well-guarded in the future, and that our economic and industrial competitive position in the world will be preserved and improved.

Without a well-rounded education and a continuing active mind, humankind can not fully enjoy the richness life has to offer. As a teacher of mine in high school used to say, "With a good book, one is never alone."

If you are a parent, I ask you to involve yourself actively in your child's education. Make sure homework is completed every evening, and stay in regular contact with your child's teacher in order to keep abreast of her or his progress. You'll be very happy that you did. ■

Public School vs. Private: The Choice is Yours

by Sally Pearce

The decision to send your child to school is already made for you. It is, however, your choice whether to send your child to the local public school or a private one. Junior League of Miami sustainer Jennie Lou Reid encourages us not to lose sight of the reason why public education exists. "Our country was formed partly to give every person in every community a chance to raise their level of education," Reid says.

Her children attend public school and she stands firmly by the decision. By the time all three children graduate they will have attended Sunset Elementary, Carver or Ponce Middle School, and Coral Gables High School where her older daughter is a student. "My children are exposed to a broad spectrum of people in our community. But this is not done at the expense of education," she explains. "I have always found that teachers truly care about the students, they like to see achievement. Teachers invest their lives in the future of the country. They have high standards and consistently meet the continual challenges of the system, like the education budget." Margaret, Reid's

middle child, is in the fifth grade at Sunset Elementary, a language magnet school. Margaret is in the Spanish program which requires that she spend an extra hour each day at school, and study not only the language, but other content

of fifth graders to visit Spain for two weeks in April. The students will tour the first week and stay with a family the second week.

Ann Goldman's son Lowell attends Palmetto High where he is a member of the tennis team. Ann appreciates that her son has the chance to compete at a highly competitive level, one advantage of being in a public school. Goldman's daughter Emilie is in the Gifted Program at Pinecrest Elementary. Two days a week Emilie attends school at Howard Drive where students from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades are grouped together and then tiered, for "creative schooling and thinking."

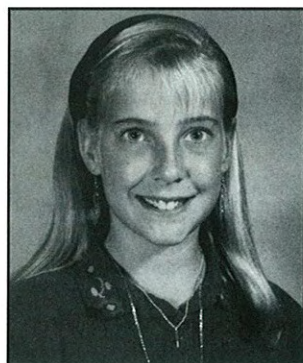
Morgan and Lindsay Latimer also attend Pinecrest. Their mother, Kathi likes Pinecrest for the diverse programs offered there. Morgan and Lindsay are president and vice-president of Future Educators of America. As

part of this organization, they read to children in lower grades and help grade papers for kindergarten through second grade teachers. In addition, Morgan is on the safety patrol and in the drama club.

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Jennie Lou Reid and daughter, Margaret, 5th



Emilie Goldman, Pinecrest Elementary, 6th grade



Maggie Blake's children, Charlotte, Kindergarten, Caroline, 6th grade, and Claywell, 3rd grade, St. Thomas Episcopal



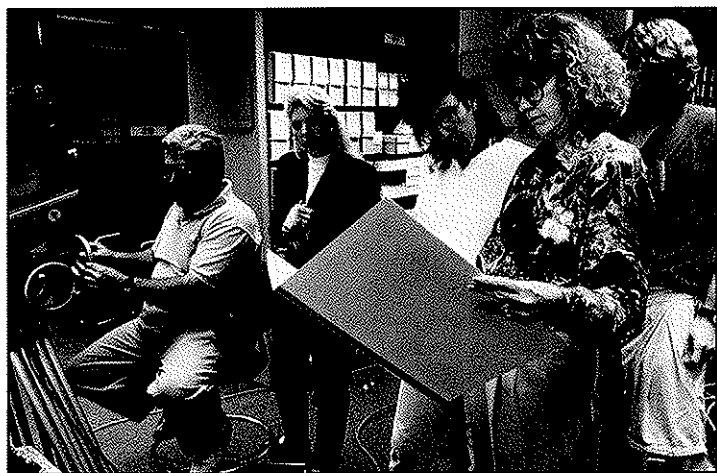
Morgan and Lindsay Latimer, Pinecrest Elementary

subjects like Social Studies, in Spanish.

Alesia Mogul is also supportive of the Spanish program at Sunset. Her fifth grade son, Elliott is the only non-native speaker in a class with fluent Spanish speakers. Elliott will be part of a group

History in the Making

On April 8, 1994, at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts; the Junior League of Miami will premiere its film production, "Our Miami: The Magic City," scripted by acclaimed local historian and JLM sustainer; **Arva Moore Parks**. The film, a project in development by the JLM for nearly three years under the leadership of **Julia Bianchi**, traces the development of Miami from a remote Indian settlement to an international metropolis. The public is invited to this evening of cultural celebration with entertainment and hors d'oeuvres representative of our community, starting at **7 p.m. Tickets (\$15)** can be obtained through the Gusman, **372-0925** or through Ticketmaster, **358-5885**.

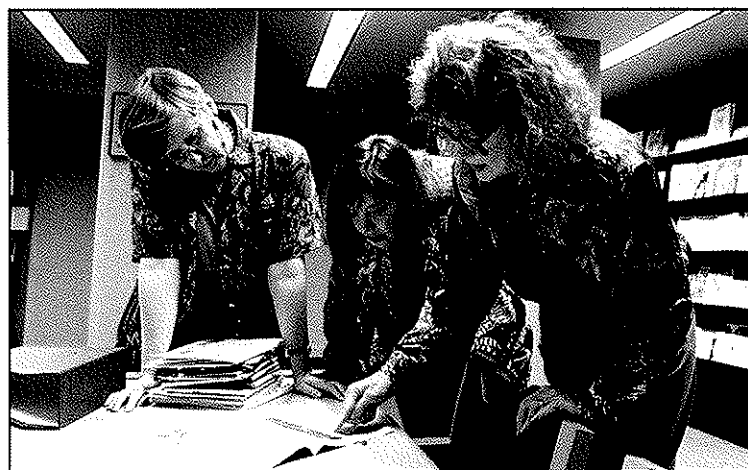


From left to right: Cameraman Fred Singer; Julia Bianchi, project chair for the JLM; Carl Kesser, principle of Kesser Post Productions, the firm producing the film; Arva Moore Parks; and Richard Malloy of Kesser.



Julia Bianchi and Arva Moore Parks don their white gloves for archival photo inspection.

These photographs show some members of the production team in action at the **Historical Museum of Southern Florida** as they research and film photos from the archives.



Historical Museum Curator and JLM sustainer Rebecca Smith, Alyce Robertson and Arva Moore Parks match images to the script for the 60-minute film.

Our Miami: The Magic City Educates Local Students

by Colleen Arey

Our Miami: The Magic City is a film whose aim is to educate the diverse Miami community. However, a film can only tell so much. With only approximately sixty minutes to speak to the audience, not every story is told. Some events are only slightly touched upon. Hence, the need to tell more.

Educating the children of Miami about Miami is the reason a curriculum guide was written to accompany the film, **Our Miami: The Magic City**. With the teaching guide, the lessons about Miami will not end with the film credits. Watching the film is only the beginning.

Visit the Miami Cemetery. See what you can discover about the city based on grave inscriptions and birth and death dates. Interview someone who lived in Miami during the Great Depression. Apply your thinking skills in the area of science. Study and compare the facts of the 1926 hurricane with Hurricane Andrew in 1992. How do the wind speeds compare? How much advance warning did people receive in 1926? In 1992? These are just a few of the sample curriculum activities suggested in the teaching guide.

In addition to such activities, the curriculum guide contains the actual script from the film. A timeline traces the events from the early 1500s to the present. In addition to local happenings, the timeline includes events of both national

and importance. This tool will permit teachers to not only incorporate local history in national and world history, but will also allow students to see how outside events affect the local community. Recollections from early Miamians are included in the guide, enabling students to compare and contrast their lives with those from the past. A list of Dade County historical sites and detailed site-related activities will encourage teachers to open the doors of their four-walled classrooms. Students and teachers alike will then have an opportunity to use Miami as a classroom. A vast bibliography in the curriculum guide gives teachers access to additional information about the Miami community. It will also allow the teachers to supply their students with primary and secondary sources about Miami's history.

Teachers can prepare themselves for **Our Miami: The Magic City**, by making use of the teaching guide. Consequently, they can better prepare students for both the film and subsequent local history lessons. Teachers will have the ability to take Miami's history beyond the film. Teachers need not rewrite their curriculums to accommodate the film, as the city's history can easily be inserted into many classroom lessons. "In the past decade, a great deal has happened in Miami and Dade County," says Paul

Hanson, Executive Director of Social Sciences for Dade County Public Schools. He continues by saying that "...local history falls through the cracks as student textbooks focus on events of national and international significance." Hanson believes the curriculum guide will bridge the gap where local history is concerned, reminding us that "local history affects their [the students'] lives directly."

Both the guide and the film will be available to all public and private schools in Dade County. According to local historian and the film's scriptwriter Arva Moore Parks, the film and the new curriculum guide "will give teachers the necessary resources to help students build a sense of pride by understanding their city and their part in the continuing story." ■

***Editor's note:** The April premiere of **Our Miami: The Magic City**, a production of the Junior League of Miami, will be featured in the next issue of *Tropical Topics*.*

*JLM member Colleen Arey is currently serving on the **Our Miami: The Magic City** committee.*

(continued from page 19)

Maggie Blake, former President of the JLM, prefers private school for her children. Her three children attend St. Thomas Episcopal School. Blake likes the benefits of smaller classes and religious instruction offered at St. Thomas. Margot Hester, daughter of Jean Hester, also attends St. Thomas. Her mother appreciates that in the smaller classroom "there is something for everyone and there are fewer discipline problems." Hester does realize that there are exceptionally self-motivated children for whom the public school system is beneficial. Her son Matthew attends Sunset Elementary and studies in the German program.

Whatever the decision you may make for your child's education, both public and private schools offer a range of benefits from class diversity to class size, from special programs to religion. Since you best know your child's abilities and special needs, you can make the best decision. ■

Sally Pearce studied literature, is now pursuing her M.S. in Education, and teaches writing at the University of Miami. She has been in the Junior League for three years.

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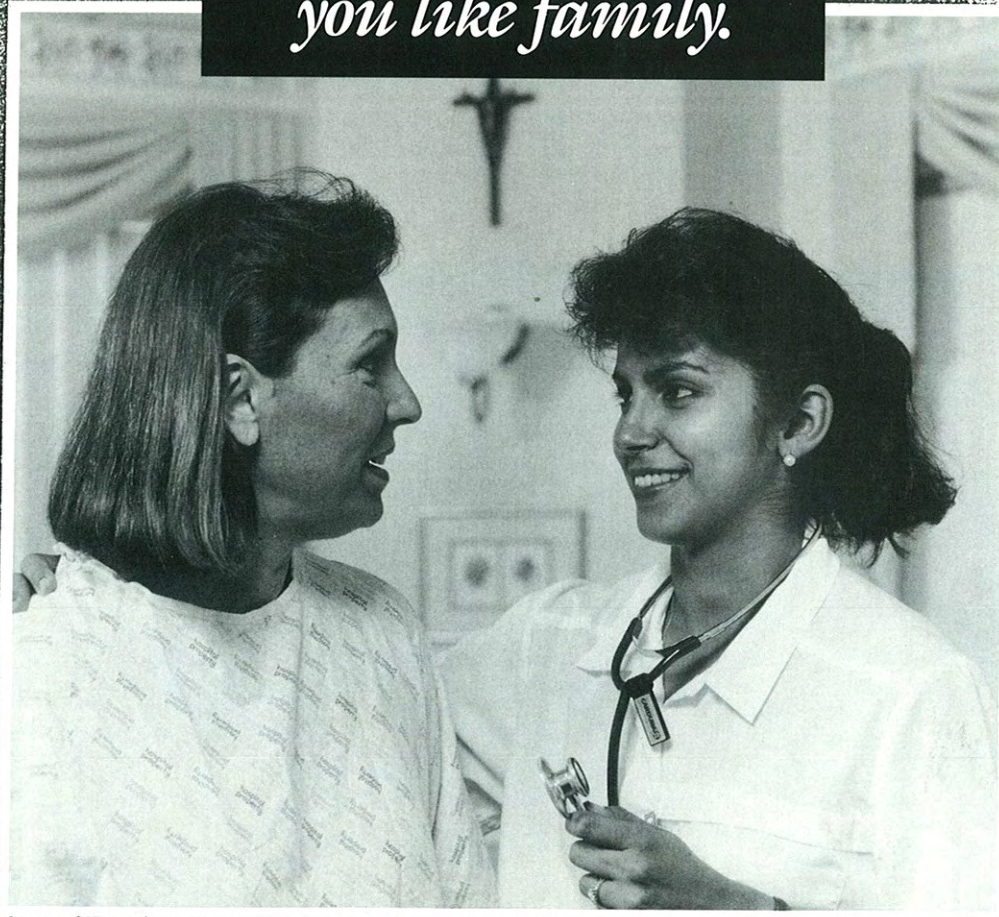
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