



Communities  
In Schools

Miami

In This Issue:    HBI Building Better Lives Award    GEARUP Grant    Movers & Shakers Award



*HBI Building Better Lives Award*

### ***BUILD A BETTER LIFE AWARD***

“My mentor’s worksite is like my home away from home,” shared Sheldon Rock, CIS of Miami alumni and panel presenter at the annual Home Builders Institute (HBI) C-CORE (Construction Coaching Opportunities to Reach Employment) Summit in New Orleans.

Nationwide, every nine seconds of each school day, a young person drops out of high school in the U.S., and nearly one-third of high school students fail to graduate on time. Communities In Schools of Miami is committed to stopping this national crisis. “Providing students with a caring relationship with an adult is one of the ways that we help students to stay in school and achieve in life,” shared Elizabeth Mejia, Executive Director of CIS of Miami. Through a partnership with HBI, CIS of Miami matches students with professionals in the field. The high school students are transported once a month to the mentor’s worksite where they not only work alongside the mentors, but they also receive personal, academic, and career mentoring. HBI, through a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, subcontracts providers across the nation to implement their C-Core mentor program. CIS of Miami lent their 15 years experience of providing school to work mentoring programs to C-Core’s initiative to engage students in the home building industries. CIS of Miami excelled in launching the program, exceeded the established goals and provided meaningful experiences to students, thereby winning the “*Build A Better Life*” Award for the most outstanding national partner. CIS won the regional award for Florida and southern Georgia as well.

CIS of Miami students and mentors participated in panel presentations and were featured as examples of

best practices. The students' testimonials were so powerful that a room filled with home builders and other executives were moved to tears. Additionally, CIS of Miami student, Dominique Houser, was awarded the Patsy and Herman Smith Fund Scholarship through the Home Builders Institute to assist with transportation and college expenses.

The success of the CIS of Miami School to Work mentor program is due to its dedicated mentor sites that include: KW Property Management, Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation, State Farm Insurance, Miami Dade College, and the US Coast Guard. "By investing time and resources in our students, we increase the likelihood that they will make positive life choices, succeed academically and contribute to the overall betterment of our community," said Elizabeth Mejia. The program's ambitious goals include more than tripling the number of mentees by 2013. To reach that goal, CIS needs more employer sites and mentors. To learn how you can get involved, please call (305) 252-5444 ext. 306 and join CIS of Miami in transforming students' lives.

Click here to see the video clip featuring "Make A Difference - Be A Mentor, Case Study: Miami video": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ5iw2zXzGw>



*Dominique and Sheldon - Panel Presenters*



### **GEARUP Award**

The Department of Education released the winners of the 2011 grant funding from the federal GEAR UP program. GEAR UP, or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, delivers college access and readiness services to low-income, primarily first generation students, for a 6 or 7 year period, starting no later than 7th grade. GEAR UP serves approximately 750,000 students each year, helps students achieve at or above grade level standards and graduate high school prepared for college-level

coursework. The program also helps students to understand the college admissions process, including financial aid. Nationally, GEAR UP students apply and enroll in post-secondary education at a higher rate than their peers.

We are proud to share that we partnered with Miami Dade College to submit a grant and were the only Florida recipient for this particular grant cycle. We are looking forward to implementing the program in schools throughout the county. The target feeder patterns are: Booker T. Washington, North Miami Senior, and Mays Middle Community School. The award, shared among the various partners who will be collaborating to deliver the services is for five million dollars over the next seven years. It is a matching federal grant that will need local support. “We are confident that we will raise the needed match. It is such an exciting partnership that will provide greatly needed continuity of services to Miami,” stated Elizabeth Mejia, Executive Director of CIS of Miami.



*After School Programs in Full Swing*



*Guitars Over Guns Operations (GO-GO) Mentors Resume Their After School Mentor Program*

### **Executive Director Receives *Movers & Shakers* Award**

Each year, Business Leader Media honors the up-and-coming leaders of the South through their *Movers & Shakers Awards*. Our very own Elizabeth Mejia, Executive Director, is one of the award recipients for

South Florida.

Elizabeth is being recognized for her outstanding achievement in managing CIS of Miami. Under her leadership, with the support of an outstanding board and staff, Elizabeth has been able to grow the program despite difficult economic times. Her proactive and conservative approach to management has allowed the organization to thrive. Furthermore, accountability is very important to Ms. Mejia and as such she has a track record of success in managing federal, state and local grants. Most importantly, the program excels in meeting its mission of helping students to achieve. Over 90% of students remain in school and over 88% are making academic improvement. She has created a work environment that is not only accountable and effective but that also nurtures and supports the staff. *Movers and Shakers* also recognizes her active involvement in her community. Ms. Mejia consistently gives back. She provides motivational talks to youth and women's groups and serves as a catechist and lector at her parish.

For an example of Elizabeth's leadership, visit our website for the latest annual report of our accomplishments.

**Communities In Schools of Miami**  
11965 SW 142 Terrace | Unit 102 | Miami, FL 33186  
[www.cismiami.org](http://www.cismiami.org) :: (Ph) 305 252-5444 :: Fax 305 252-4664