# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ALEX PENELAS
MAYOR

September 14, 2004

Greetings:

For one full year we challenged the residents of Miami-Dade County to be healthy and fit. We motivated them to change their attitudes about physical exercise, eating the right food, and controlling their stress. We taught them to understand the relationship between physical health and mental well-being.

As a result of our efforts, many people are leading healthier lives.

I would like to commend the **Health Foundation of South Florida** for its unwavering commitment and dedication to improving the quality of life of the Miami-Dade County community. It is through its leadership that we were able to transcend cultural and economic barriers to build community while promoting health and fitness. Essential to the success of this initiative were the sponsorships of many local and national companies including **Mercy Hospital**, **LA Fitness**, **Kelloggs**, **and The Miami Herald**. Together with many County organizations and departments, including Parks and Recreation, County Health Department and the Mayor's Office, these corporations were instrumental in carry out this yearlong, 15-event campaign. Accordingly, they deserve the highest level of accolade.

This initiative was fostered in response to ever-increasing trends associated with obesity, as well as, the need to create opportunities for education pertaining to health and fitness. Unfortunately, it is a widely known – and sad fact -- that 70 percent of Americans do not exercise. Nationwide trends show that sedentary lifestyles continue to fester among Americans and these lifestyles categorically increase the prevalence of health related illness that continue to impact millions of lives.

Fortunately, The Mayor's Health and Fitness Challenge has succeeded in capturing the attention of many. It is my expectation that the 2003-2004 Annual Report and its subsequent recommendations and findings will provide a basis for continued discussion pertaining to the health arena. Furthermore, I hope that The 2003-2004 Mayor's Health and Fitness Challenge will become a model for future local and national initiatives.

I want to thank our sponsors, our volunteers, our County employees – and the many people of Miami-Dade County who participated – for making this a healthier and better community.

Very truly yours,

Alex Penelas
Mayor

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