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MESSAGE FROM PARKS FOUNDATION OF MIAMI-DADE BOARD PRESIDENT RAUL A. GARCIA, CPA

(MIAMI, July 14, 2015) – I'd like to thank Miami Foundation President and CEO Javier Alberto Soto for his thoughtful [op-ed piece](#) in The Miami Herald on July 8, 2015, touting the importance of Miami-Dade County Parks and the need for increased Parks funding.

The voices of concerned citizens, like you, and [op-ed pieces like this one](#) and [Letters to the Editor](#) like the one written by David Lawrence, Jr., have compelled Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez to propose an additional \$10 million to the County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces budget for 2016. If passed, this will be the first time since 2007 that the Parks Department budget has been *increased*.

We need additional funding to ensure that our children play on safe playgrounds; that they have the opportunity to participate in organized sports and afterschool programs; that facilities and grounds are well-kept and maintained. Remember last year when Parks didn't have the funds to cut the grass? And I am certain you've noticed that many of our facilities need repair and updating. Programs like camps and swimming lessons need significant support if we are to meet demand. Our Parks professionals go the extra mile to make certain that residents and visitors enjoy County Parks, but we can only stretch a dollar so far. Restoring funding to 2007 levels may take a few budget cycles, but this is a step in the right direction.

Through surveys, we know that the public wants safe, beautiful Parks in Miami-Dade County. Popular trail projects like The Underline and the Ludlam Trail confirm that like the rest of the nation, we value bicycling and walkability. We want to enjoy our Parks! Several weeks ago, Dick Anderson, a founding member of the Parks Foundation, and I visited with Mayor Gimenez to let him know that with our improved economy and property values, it is time to invest in Miami-Dade County Parks by increasing the Department's budget.

But we need your help too.

Are you a member of the Parks Foundation? I invite you to [join](#) today. Your membership will enable the Parks Foundation to cover what is not funded by the County budget, like camp and swimming scholarships. On this hot July day, you are well aware that we need to plant

additional shade trees in our Parks and support Park programs that reach children on summer break from school. Your [membership](#) will make a difference.

I am grateful for your support and look forward to seeing you at a Miami-Dade County Park in the near future.

Best Regards,

Raul A. Garcia, CPA
President
Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade

Miami-Dade Parks is a world-class parks system supported by the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade and focused on Placemaking, Health and Fitness, and Conservation and Stewardship. For more information, visit www.miamidade.gov/parks.

About Miami-Dade Parks: <http://www.miami-dade.gov/parks/about-parks.asp>.

About the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade: http://www.miamidade.gov/parks_foundation/about-us.asp.

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To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any Miami-Dade Parks-sponsored program or meeting, contact Lucy Binhack, 305-755-7848, binhack@miamidade.gov at least seven days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service).