

MR. CHAIRMAN, COMMISSIONERS, FELLOW RESIDENTS...

GOOD MORNING!

IT'S MY PLEASURE TO RECOGNIZE THIS MONTH'S SHINING SCHOLARS...

THESE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN DUE TO THEIR WORK IN THE AREAS OF SCHOLARSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND OVERALL EXCELLENCE.

THEY ALSO SHARE A PASSION FOR SERVICE TO OTHERS, AND THEIR EFFORTS ARE MAKING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.

AS WITH PAST WINNERS, THE FULL PROFILES OF EACH OF THIS MONTH'S SCHOLARS WILL BE FEATURED IN THE HALL OF STARS ON MY WEBSITE: WWW.MIAMIDADE.GOV/MAYOR/SHINING-SCHOLARS

OUR UNSTOPPABLE SCHOLAR IS BELEN GONZALEZ, A SENIOR AT OUR LADY OF LOURDES ACADEMY, WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER XAVIER SUAREZ'S DISTRICT.

"BEE BEE" AS SHE IS AFFECTIONATELY REFERRED TO BY FRIENDS AND FAMILY, LOST HER FATHER TO CANCER EARLIER THIS YEAR AND, DESPITE THIS

PAINFUL LOSS, SHE NEVER MADE EXCUSES AT SCHOOL, TAKING ALL HER EXAMS AND TURNING IN ALL OF HER ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME. AS A RESULT, SHE HAS BECOME A LEADER IN HER FAMILY, TAKING CARE OF HER YOUNGER BROTHER AND SISTER BY HELPING THEM WITH HOMEWORK AFTER SCHOOL.

HER BROTHER IS ONE OF SEVEN PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES TO HAVE A TYPE OF ALBINISM [AL-BUH-NIZ-UH M] THAT AFFECTS HIS EYES, AND HIS CONDITION HAS TAUGHT HER EXTRAORDINARY PATIENCE AND KINDNESS.

EACH SUMMER “BEE BEE” SERVES AS A COUNSELOR WITH SHAKE-A-LEG, AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS PASSIONATE ABOUT GETTING PEOPLE WITH ALL RANGES OF ABILITIES OUT ON THE WATER. SHE SERVES ON HER SCHOOL’S KEY CLUB AND HELPING HANDS CLUB.

SHE ALSO PLAYS GOLF COMPETITIVELY AT HER SCHOOL, AND ENJOYS THAT THE GAME IS BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGING. I SHARE HER PASSION FOR THE GAME OF GOLF.

SHE IS JOINED BY HER MOTHER BETTY GONZALEZ, HER GRANDPARENTS AND HER BEST FRIENDS FROM LOURDES ACADEMY. LATER TODAY, THEY WILL ALL CELEBRATE A BACCALAUREATE MASS IN PREPARATION FOR GRADUATION ON THURSDAY.

SHE WILL BE ATTENDING GEORGIA TECH IN THE FALL WITH A SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY ENGINEERING.

BEE BEE, YOU MAY NOT KNOW THIS BUT MY WIFE AND MY DAUGHTER ARE LOURDES ALUMNI AND THIS IS VERY SPECIAL TO US...

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE AN INSPIRATION FOR SO MANY...

CONGRATULATIONS! LET'S ALL GIVE BELEN "BEE BEE" GONZALEZ A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

OUR EMERGING LEADER IS JIANA BLAHA, A JUNIOR AT MIAMI BEACH SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER SALLY HEYMAN'S DISTRICT.

JIANA HELPS INSTRUCTORS TEACH GOLF TO CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND AUTISM THROUGH THE FIRST TEE, A GROUP THAT

STRIVES TO IMPACT THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE BY PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT BUILD CHARACTER AND PROMOTE HEALTHY CHOICES THROUGH THE GAME OF GOLF.

JIANA IS ALSO THE TREASURER OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF TEENS FOR FITNESS AT HER SCHOOL.

JIANA HAS REACHED THE EAGLE LEVEL, THE HIGHEST LEVEL, IN THE FIRST TEE PROGRAM AND HAS ACCUMULATED OVER 1,500 COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS SINCE SHE BEGAN WITH THE GROUP IN 2009.

LET'S ALL GIVE JIANA A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

AND, OUR PURSUER OF EXCELLENCE IS SANTIAGO TOBAR POTES, A JUNIOR AT THE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES WHO LIVES IN SENATOR JAVIER SOUTO'S DISTRICT.

SANTIAGO CAN SPEAK AND WRITE FOUR LANGUAGES - ENGLISH, SPANISH, FRENCH, AND PORTUGUESE AND CAN ALSO COMMUNICATE IN CREOLE. HE IS CURRENTLY LEARNING MANDARIN CHINESE AND WAS RECENTLY AWARDED A FULL

SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY THE LANGUAGE FOR ONE MONTH DURING THE SUMMER IN CHINA.

SANTIAGO IS ALSO THE ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER FOR THE GREATER MIAMI YOUTH SYMPHONY.

HE HAS PARTICIPATED FOR SEVERAL YEARS IN FLORIDA'S ALL STATE ORCHESTRA GROUP, CONSISTING OF THE BEST MUSICIANS BY GRADE LEVEL IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

SANTIAGO IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION IN DOWNTOWN MIAMI AND THAT INSPIRED HIM TO CONTACT A "TED TALK" PROFESSIONAL TO HELP HIM ESTABLISH A PROJECT WHICH WOULD PROVIDE VEGETABLE GARDENS TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY AND FOOD FOR THOSE WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE.

SANTIAGO PLANS TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT OF HIS SCHOOL'S STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION IN ORDER TO BUILD BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION FOR ALL HIS PEERS.

HE ASPIRES TO ATTEND A TOP THREE UNIVERSITY AND LATER ATTEND HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL TO PURSUE A CAREER AS A NEUROSURGEON.

LET'S GIVE SANTIAGO A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

BELEN, JIANA AND SANTIAGO - YOU AND YOUR FELLOW SHINING SCHOLARS SHOW THAT THE FUTURE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY IS INDEED BRIGHT...

WE WISH YOU MUCH CONTINUED SUCCESS!

MR. CHAIR, COMMISSIONERS AND FELLOW RESIDENTS, PLEASE JOIN ME IN CONGRATULATING THIS MONTH'S MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS!

LET'S GIVE OUR MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS ONE LAST ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

