Pickleball with a Purpose Tournament

VIP®



Interview with Jencarlos Canela & Olivia Elliott

Presenting: A Night with Purpose Gala

7th Annual VIP Summer Camp Service Project

Year 13
No. 31
FREE
Miami FL. 2025

A Summer of Service: **VIP's Sleep-Away Summer Camp Service Project**



This past summer, Very Important Purpose (VIP) hosted its most successful Sleep-Away Summer Camp Service Project yet, bringing together over 115 campers across six weeks of impactful community service. Teens from schools such as American Heritage, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, Carrollton, Christopher Columbus High School, Divine Savior, Doral Academy, Downtown Doral Upper School, Gulliver Prep, Immaculata-La Salle High School, MAST Academy, Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, Palmetto Middle, Pinecrest Glades Academy, Pinecrest Preparatory Middle and High School, Saint Andrew's School, Saint Brendan High School, True North Classical Academy, West Broward High School, Westminster, and more joined in this rewarding experience.

Campers had the unique opportunity to give back to their community by working with organizations such as Ronald McDonald House Charities, The WOW Center, Title 1 Migrant Program, Camillus House, Miami Rescue Mission, Hermanos de la Calle, Hope 4 the Homeless, Great Heights Academy, SPCA Horse Rescue, beach cleanups, and more.



In addition to hands-on service, VIP provided a well-rounded experience filled with personal growth and education. Campers attended guest speaker sessions, including a college prep expert who guided them through SAT/ACT strategies and the college application process. They also heard from a motivational speaker who shared his journey of overcoming adversity and now educates others on making positive life choices.

Workshops and activities made the camp both enriching and engaging. Prada's Bunch, a therapy dog organization, led interactive sessions that fostered emotional well-being. An investment and stock market group educated campers on financial literacy.
Participants also had the chance to earn CPR/First Aid certification and develop essential social skills in an etiquette course.



Beyond service and learning, campers bonded through fun experiences such as sports tournaments, talent shows, karaoke nights, game nights, cooking workshops, and more. The sleep-away format, hosted at VIP's Homestead Cabin, El Escondite, allowed participants to fully immerse themselves in this transformative program, building lifelong friendships while making a tangible impact in their community.

With six weeks already planned for Summer 2025 (and more pending), VIP is gearing up for another unforgettable season of service, leadership, and fun.















VIP Summer Service Project

Embrace an Unforgettable Summer of Giving Back at VIP's 7th Annual Sleep-Away Service Project!

Very Important Purpose invites middle school and high school teens to embark on a rewarding journey this upcoming Summer 2024. Our Sleep-Away Summer Service Project offers a unique opportunity for teens to dive into a world of empathy, compassion, and service. With several weeks to choose from, teens will have the chance to make a real impact in their community, working alongside various local organizations and within our own foundation. The best part? Volunteers will earn up to 100 hours of valuable community service by the end of their stay.

What's in store for our enthusiastic volunteers?

- ☑ Learn essential life skills: teamwork, effective communication, and leadership.
- ☑ Gain a deeper appreciation for life by supporting local organizations in need.
- ☑ Engage in daily forums with inspiring guests.
- ☑ Enjoy a variety of activities, from sports like soccer, volleyball, basketball, to fun events like Talent Shows, Karaoke Nights, and Game Nights.
- ☑ Get hands-on with cooking, baking, and everyday routines.
- ☑ Earn a CPR certification.

Summer Camp Price: $1,000 per student

Price Includes:

- ☑ Accommodation at our Homestead Cabin "El Escondite"
- ☑ Breakfast, lunch and dinner all full days
- ☑ Transportation to all facilities
- ☑ 4 shirts that must be worn when out of the cabin.

2025 7th Annual Summer Camp Service Projects Dates:

- ☑ June 9 - June 14
- ☑ June 16 - June 21
- ☑ June 23 - June 28
- ☑ July 7 - July 12
- ☑ July 14 - July 19
- ☑ July 28 - August 1
- ☑ August 4 - August 9

VIP STAFF

305-600-1327 | info@vip-305.com

VIP STAFF:

Yessika Siles:
Founder of VIP 305 Miami & Very Important Purpose

Amarette Suarez:
Program Event Coordinator & Magazine Editor

Sebastian Lopez Siles:
School Clubs Administrator

ART DIRECTOR:

bd CREATIVE STUDIO
(786)-393-8945
bdcreativestudio.com

FRONT COVER

Photoshoot by:
UDS
info@udsphoto.com

Pickleball
With a Purpose

Olivia Elliott, a 23-year-old tennis professional from England, has recently transitioned from college tennis to a professional career. Beyond her athletic pursuits, she has ventured into modeling and television hosting, showcasing her multifaceted talents. Now making her mark in Miami, Olivia continues to inspire young athletes and creatives alike.

We are excited to have Olivia's support in our upcoming pickleball tournament, which is dedicated to assisting individuals with special needs. Her involvement not only elevates the event but also underscores her commitment to community engagement.



1. Transition to Professional Tennis: Can you share your journey from college tennis to the professional circuit? What challenges and rewards have you encountered along the way?
The challenges I faced leaving college, moving officially on the other side of the world from my country and pursuing a dream is the financial side of things. I support myself so it has been very stressful not letting money enter your head. If you don't perform you don't get paid and that is the reality of playing an individual sport. The feelings of fear start to creep in which has been the hardest thing to overcome. Once you overcome the fear you start to love the hustle and grind of this game. It allows you to learn how to love fear or pain. I get to do something I love everyday. I have put my heart and soul into this sport since I was 4 years old and it is allowing me to live the life I want. It has been 8 months since I graduated and I could not be happier with my decision.

2. Modeling and Television Hosting: How did you become involved in modeling and television hosting? How do these pursuits complement your tennis career?
These pursuits are what allows me to play tennis. There are so many endorsements and sponsorships around tennis, modeling compliments the sport very well. I think sport and fashion have merged in the best of ways in the last few years and I love creating with brands of my dreams like Lacoste or Wilson. I also feel very comfortable in front of a camera so TV hosting is something I enjoy doing. It has allowed me to expand and learn new talents.

3. Community Engagement: You're supporting our pickleball tournament benefiting individuals with special needs. What motivates you to participate in community events like this?
I think everyone should have a chance to play sports no matter what age, gender, ethnicity, disability. Sport is something that brings everyone together, makes you feel joy, makes you learn new skills. If I can support and help anyone feel that then I would do that every day of my life.

4. Advice for Young Athletes: What guidance would you offer to young athletes striving to balance academics, sports, and personal interests?
It can feel impossible at times or you can feel very overwhelmed, you have to make sure you're organized. Write your week out in your planner, have your clothes ready the night before, make sure your mind is organized so you can feel calm while doing your sport. Performing under pressure is part of sport so handling all of it at a young age is preparing you for the future. I promise you if you can do all of that so young, you will be able to handle anything when you're older. Make sure you find something that makes you feel calm, whether it's music, reading, swimming, yoga, going to the spa, find that one thing that's your release of stress.

5. Supporting Teens: In your experience, how important is it for teenagers to stay active, and what role can sports play in their personal development?
Sport can teach a kid more than a classroom sometimes, the discipline, concentration, team work, physical or mental demand. I think it can make kids happier playing sports, or if they are not into sports, finding time to be outside, going on walks with friends or family. Appreciating the outdoors can change a kid's personality and I think it's incredibly important. .

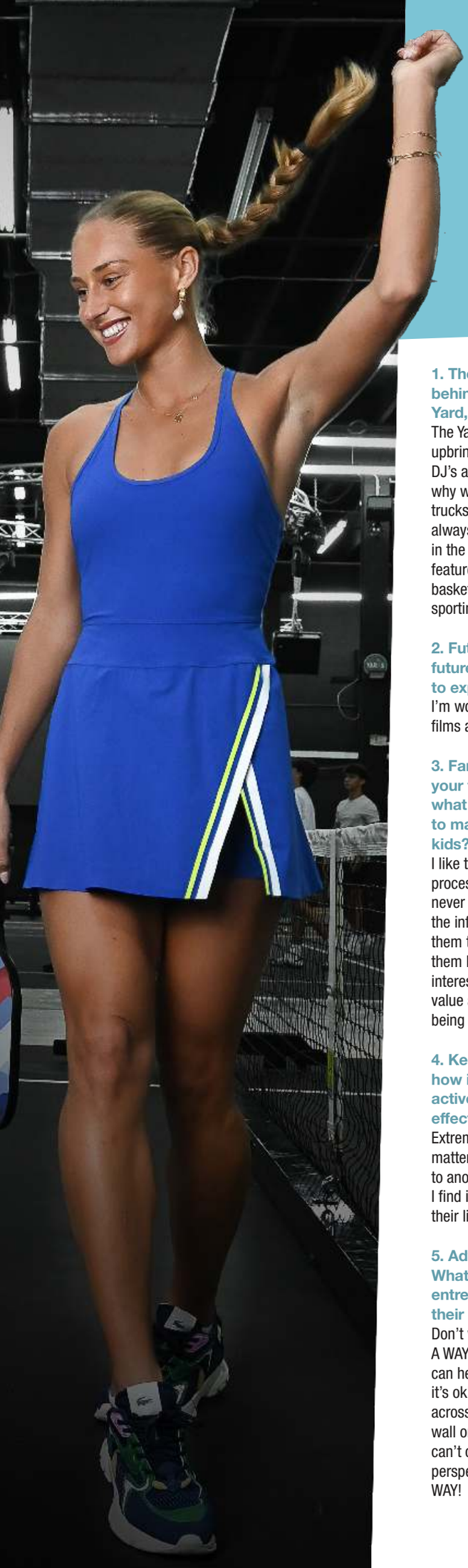
6. Plans with JAPA: Could you tell us about your involvement with the Junior Athletic Pickleball Association (JAPA) and any upcoming initiatives you're excited about?
I am a Co- Founder of JAPA. I think it's important for there to be a junior league for kids to learn the skills young. Learning a racquetball young can Segway into a lot of different racket sports if they chose that path. This will help them prepare for tournaments at the pro level at a young age with the right training and conditioning. My drive is to get as many kids playing pickleball or sport. Tennis changed my life and I want to give them the chance to experience that. We have started JAPA training for the season. We will have summer camps and winter camps coming up for kids at the yards in Hialeah. There are tournaments throughout the months that have prize money which we are getting the kids ready to play which I am excited for them.

7. Pickleball vs. Tennis: As a professional tennis player, how do you find playing pickleball? Are there skills from tennis that translate well to pickleball?
I find it fun to play pickleball. I think it's very inclusive for anyone to play. I believe the skills that translate is the dinking, volleying, serving and general aim of the ball.

8. Life in Miami: What has your experience been like moving to Miami, and how has the city influenced your professional and personal life?
I have loved moving to Miami, I have always wanted to live by the water and beach so for me this is a dream. There are so many opportunities here in the fashion, sport and modeling space. I feel as though I have met so many amazing people here and I find it amazing how people are willing to help and give you the opportunities if you work hard for it. I have never been happier in my personal life living with my boyfriend Jencarlos. I never thought I would find happiness like this. Having support behind me drives me to push harder in every aspect of my life.

9. Overcoming Adversity: You've mentioned the importance of resilience in your career. Can you share a specific instance where you overcame a significant challenge?
Wow where to start with adversity- tennis has been a rollercoaster. I fell out of love with tennis at 16 and really wanted to stop playing. There were times I was practicing while crying, I would feel depressed getting up at 6 every morning for training , I felt like I was in a hole that I didn't know how to get out of. There were family issues that made me struggle with my mental health massively. My coach Alan Jones worked so hard with me to get me in the right place. I decided to go to America for something fresh, I went alone not knowing anyone or what was ahead of me was the scariest moment. But this was the time I said to myself this is now or never to find my love for tennis and find love for myself within this journey and to make something of all the years I have put into this. Now I love tennis again, I always have in my bones.

10. Future Aspirations: Looking ahead, what are your goals both within and beyond the tennis court? Are there new ventures or projects you're eager to pursue?
My goal within the next year is to increase my WTA ranking aiming for qualifying for grand slams. I keep looking for campaigns. I just signed a contract with Wilson and Lacoste for another year. I would make the cover of GQ Magazine or a sports illustrated model. There are conversations in the works for my own broadcasting show. There are many things I am excited about, I love this venture with JAPA to see how many kids we can truly inspire. If anyone reading this has any questions for me please reach out to me on my socials, I am here to help.



Today, we have the pleasure of speaking with Jencarlos Canela, a Miami native whose deep roots in Hialeah have profoundly influenced his journey as an entrepreneur and artist. Growing up just minutes from Amelia Earhart Park, Jeancarlo cherishes the memories he created there, which have inspired his latest venture, The Yards.

This new endeavor aims to encapsulate the magic of shared experiences from his childhood, bringing together sports, family gatherings, and community celebrations under one roof. Beyond his entrepreneurial pursuits, Jeancarlo is a dedicated father of two, an accomplished artist, and a passionate advocate for youth engagement and empowerment. His multifaceted career and commitment to community make him a true visionary in our midst.

1. The Yards: Can you share the inspiration behind your new business venture, The Yard, and what you hope to achieve with it?
The Yards is a larger version of my childhood and upbringing. My family parties were epic. Live music, DJ's and good times with family and friends. That's why we have the live events. My uncle owned food trucks and that's why we have the food trucks. I always played sports with my brothers and friends in the backyard and that's why we have the sports feature integrated into the venue from pickleball, basketball, tennis and our watch parties for many sporting events.

2. Future Artistic Plans: As an artist, what future projects or directions are you excited to explore?
I'm working on a new album and I'm producing two films at the moment.

3. Family Involvement: How do you keep your two children involved in your life, and what advice do you have for parents striving to maintain strong connections with their kids?
I like to involve them by sharing my journey and process with them and ask them for their input. I've never told them what to do. I provide them with all the information they need on any matter and allow them to make their choices. I feel that has helped them become more independent and take a natural interest in my projects because they feel they bring value and are a part of it because their opinions are being heard and taken into account.

4. Keeping Teens Active: In your opinion, how important is it to keep teenagers active, and what strategies have you found effective?
Extremely important! Support their interests no matter how small they may seem. One thing leads to another and if you could help them try things out, I find it will create a proactive energy and flow to their lives.

5. Advice for Young Entrepreneurs: What advice would you offer to young entrepreneurs who have visions of starting their own businesses?
Don't wait for anyone to help you get started. FIND A WAY & MAKE YOUR WAY! Your parents if they can help are great but if not, it's ok! Any excuse you come across that may seem like a wall or something you just can't overcome, change your perspective. FIND ANOTHER WAY!

6. Pickleball Tournament Support: Thank you for your amazing support in this pickleball tournament. Could you invite all our VIP family members to participate in the tournament on March 33rd?
Come hang with us at the yards March 23rd! We have food trucks, music and of course pickleball with a purpose!

7. Hialeah Roots & The Yards: We know you grew up in Hialeah and made some of your fondest memories at Amelia. How has that personal connection influenced the vision behind The Yards?
The yards is inspired by the childhood I had. I feel so blessed to have had the upbringing I had. It was truly some of the best years of my life. I want everyone to experience a piece of that and that's what The Yards is.

8. Bringing People Together: You've talked about capturing the magic of shared experiences under one roof. What do you hope The Yards will bring to the community in terms of connection and culture?
I just hope that when people look back at some of the moments they enjoyed the most with friends and family in their lives, that some of those moments will be in the yards.

9. Balancing Business, Art, and Family: Between running a business, pursuing your art, and being a father, how do you find balance, and what advice would you give to others trying to do the same?
Find synergy and connectivity between the things you're doing so that one thing feeds the other.













Making a Difference

One Sandwich at a Time

Since the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic began, Very Important Purpose (VIP) has been on a mission to make a tangible difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. What started as a small initiative to provide meals during uncertain times has grown into a signature monthly event that touches countless lives.

Each month, VIP hosts 2-3 after-school sandwich-making events where volunteers prepare lunch bags for the homeless. These lunch bags include two fresh sandwiches, snacks, and a bottle of water, ensuring a complete meal for those in need. The events attract 30 to 60 volunteers from local schools such as Belen, Columbus, Saint Brendan Elementary & High School, Lourdes, La Salle, Saint John Neumann, ACC, Florida Christian, and more. After assembling the bags, a group of 10-15 dedicated volunteers embarks on a field trip to personally distribute them to the downtown Miami area and partnering organizations, including the Miami Rescue Mission, Saint Agatha, Hope 4 the Homeless, Camillus House, and a local shelter home.

This act of service has become a cornerstone of VIP's mission, bringing together individuals of all ages to foster compassion and community engagement. Over the years, the sandwich events have grown not only in size but also in impact, creating a ripple effect of kindness that inspires others to contribute.

VIP's dedication to these events reflects their belief in the power of small actions to create meaningful change. With every sandwich bag distributed, the organization reinforces its commitment to uplifting those in need and providing hope to South Florida's homeless community.

VIP Connect Club

Empowering Students to Make a Difference

The VIP Connect Club is expanding during the 2024-2025 school year, currently active in seven schools, with plans for more in the future. The club is open at Christopher Columbus High School, Belen Jesuit High School, Immaculata-La Salle, Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, ISPA, Miami Arts Studio, and Archbishop Coleman Carroll.

VIP Connect Club members have the opportunity to plan and execute school events in collaboration with Very Important Purpose (VIP), gaining hands-on experience in event management and leadership. This direct involvement allows students to make a real impact on their school communities through volunteer projects, charity fundraisers, and more.

Beyond event planning, the club offers networking opportunities, skill-building in community outreach, and a chance to connect with like-minded peers who share a passion for service. With plans for future expansion, the VIP Connect Club is fostering a new generation of young leaders dedicated to making a positive difference.

Reach out to us to open or join a club at your school:
info@vip-305.com

VIP Very important Purpose

Growing with Purpose

By Amarette Suarez & Yessika Siles



At Very Important Purpose (VIP), our mission has always been about more than providing services — it's about inspiring and empowering the next generation to discover their purpose and make a positive impact in their communities. Through our events and initiatives, we aim to show our youth that helping others is one of the most meaningful ways to live with intention.

From our humble beginnings, VIP has become a dynamic force for change, offering countless opportunities for hands-on community engagement. Each month, we host 10-15 service opportunities, ranging from Sandwich Events for the Homeless to Direct Distribution Field Trips and CPR/First Aid Classes. Our monthly events, including Dream Board Creations, bring together organizations like The WOW Center and Ronald McDonald House Charities to create meaningful collaborations and lasting impact.

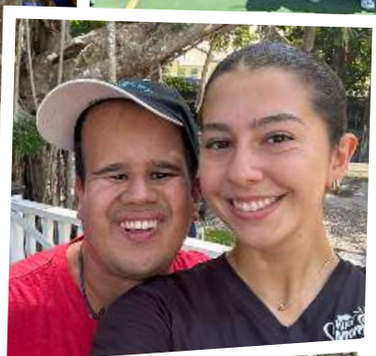
Our holiday events, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, serve low-income families, foster children, and individuals with special needs. These celebrations continue to grow each year, and we have exciting projects planned to further expand our outreach, including mental health, wellness, and educational initiatives.

One of the pillars of our foundation is the Annual Summer Camp Service Project, which has grown beyond our expectations since it began in 2019. What started with just 10 campers in one summer has grown to nearly 115 this past year. Many of our campers return year after year, and our dedicated volunteers inspire us with their ongoing commitment to serve.

As we continue this journey of growth, purpose, and community, we remain inspired by all who join us in making a difference. Together, we are building a brighter future for those in need.

















Immaculata-La Salle Students Dive into Marine Science with Shark Tagging Adventure

Immaculata-La Salle High School's Marine Science students recently embarked on an unforgettable "Shark Tagging Day," teaming up with the Shark Research Team from the University of Miami. The hands-on experience offered students a unique opportunity to learn about marine conservation and the critical importance of protecting our oceans.

Led by expert researchers, the students participated in tagging sharks, a process that helps scientists monitor shark populations and study their migration patterns.

Through this immersive experience, students gained valuable insights into the delicate balance of marine ecosystems and the vital role sharks play in maintaining ocean health.

The day was filled with excitement and discovery as students observed the research process firsthand and contributed to meaningful conservation efforts. The collaboration between Immaculata-La Salle and the University of Miami's Shark Research Team highlights the school's dedication to experiential learning, empowering students to apply their classroom knowledge to real-world challenges.

This "shark-tastic" adventure not only inspired students to appreciate marine life but also reinforced their responsibility as stewards of the environment. Experiences like this underscore Immaculata-La Salle's commitment to preparing its students to make a positive impact on the world through education and action.

Food, Wine, and Community Shine at **Christopher Columbus High School**





Christopher Columbus High School hosted its highly anticipated Food & Wine 2024 event on November 23rd, transforming the campus into a vibrant celebration of culinary excellence and community spirit. Alumni, parents, faculty, and friends came together to indulge in an incredible variety of dishes from local restaurants, sip on craft beverages, and enjoy decadent desserts, all while reconnecting and strengthening bonds.

The evening featured live music, creating a festive atmosphere that set the perfect tone for a night of celebration. Guests also had the opportunity to participate in a silent auction, offering unique items and experiences, with all proceeds directly supporting scholarships, campus improvements, and programs that enhance student life.

Food & Wine 2024 wasn't just a feast for the senses; it was a meaningful way for the Columbus community to come together for a shared purpose. The event's success highlighted the school's dedication to fostering excellence and ensuring every student has access to enriching opportunities. It was a night to remember, and the excitement for next year's event is already building.









St. John Neumann Catholic School's Service Program:
Fostering Community Engagement and Compassion

At St. John Neumann Catholic School (SJNCS) in Miami, the Service Program is a cornerstone of the institution's commitment to faith in action. This initiative encourages students to actively participate in parish stewardship by engaging in various service activities that benefit both the parish and the broader community.

A significant focus of the program is supporting Sacred Heart, SJNCS's sister parish located in Homestead, Florida. Through their involvement, students gain firsthand experience in assisting community members, fostering a sense of empathy and social responsibility.

The Service Program is designed to address diverse needs within the parish and surrounding areas. Rather than concentrating on fundraising, the emphasis is on raising awareness and encouraging active participation. This approach allows students to recognize the impact of their contributions and understand the importance of helping their neighbors.

By integrating service into the educational experience, SJNCS not only enriches students' academic growth but also instills core values of compassion and community engagement. This holistic approach ensures that students develop into well-rounded individuals who are prepared to make meaningful contributions to society.

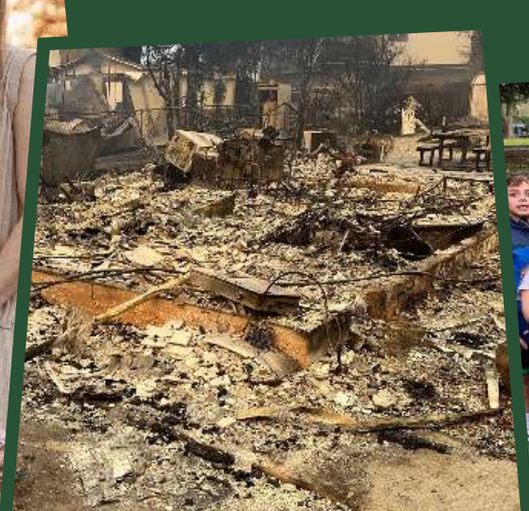
A Generous Heart:
Westminster Students Show True Compassion

In a truly inspiring act of kindness, four remarkable Westminster 3rd graders—Blake Comber, Hunter Kurenuma, Michael Celaya, and Van Urquidi—decided to do something extraordinary for a family in need. When they celebrated their joint birthday party, they asked guests to skip the usual gifts and instead make donations to Amanda Loucks, a Westminster alum, and her family who tragically lost their home in the recent California wildfires. Their thoughtfulness and generosity raised an incredible $1,600, showcasing the powerful compassion of these young boys.

Amanda, along with her family, has been deeply moved by this unexpected act of kindness. It's moments like these that remind us how the smallest gestures can make the biggest impact, and how our community comes together to support those in need.

As California continues to face the devastation caused by the wildfires, our hearts go out to those affected. We stand with Amanda and her family, and all those who have lost so much.







Over The Top Gala Success

Article Written By Teresa Martinez, Director of Communications



The Belen Jesuit Over the Top Gala, held on November 2nd, was an incredible event and the most profitable gala in the school's history. In all, $569,000 was raised for the Financial Assistance Program.

Presented by My Father Cigars, the gala was held at the JW Marriott Marquis, and everything about the evening was wonderful, from the fantastic decor to the music and circus performers to the food.

"Seldom do we have the opportunity to put on an event like this, but when we do, it's always incredible," said Fr. Willie, S.J. '87. "To have raised so much money is very exciting, but more importantly, it reinforced that we are not just on the right track but moving forward as a Catholic- Jesuit school in a very positive way. I am grateful to everyone who supported the gala with their sponsorship and everyone who joined us in celebrating 170 years of providing the best education."

"Watching the Belen community unite to raise unprecedented funds for the school's financial assistance program was nothing short of inspiring," Gala Chairperson Liana de Mena, P'29. "The generosity shown will ensure that deserving students, who might otherwise be unable to afford it, will have the opportunity to receive an exceptional education at Belen. I am incredibly proud to serve as Chairperson, alongside auction Chairperson Patti Franyie P'26, of this remarkable event, where the power of community and compassion came together to make a lasting difference in the lives of so many."

The community participated in the online silent auction, which featured travel and entertainment experiences, art, memorabilia, and more. Items were sold to members of the Belen family across the country, showing that Belen is in fact everywhere.

This year's gala marks the first one since we changed from an annual event. The next gala will be held in the Fall of 2029 to celebrate 175 years. "The fact that this event isn't being held annually definitely encouraged people to participate," said Rebeca Lowell, Corporate Engagement and Advancement Event Coordinator. "We were blessed to have a record number of sponsors and numerous volunteers and community members that helped with the success of the auction. It takes a village!"

The Belen Financial Assistance Program is made possible thanks to the generous contributions of Belen's friends and families. Last school year, we provided over 2.4 million dollars, enabling many students to receive a Belen Jesuit education.



Our Lady of Lourdes Academy Raises Awareness for Teen Dating Violence

Our Lady of Lourdes Academy recently took a stand against teen dating violence by hosting a Teen Dating Violence Awareness Day. Sophomore students participated in the initiative by wearing their orange class shirts—the official color of violence awareness—to show solidarity and help spread an important message about safety and prevention.

As part of the event, students in theology classes created infographics to educate their peers about the warning signs of unhealthy relationships and ways to seek help. These resources were shared on the school's social media, further amplifying the message. Through initiatives like this, Our Lady of Lourdes Academy continues to empower students with knowledge and advocacy, reinforcing the importance of fostering healthy and respectful relationships.





Saint Brendan High School Students Spread Holiday Cheer Through Toy Drive

Saint Brendan High School recently showcased the true spirit of giving through their participation in The Christmas Smiles Project. On December 17, 2024, students joined a toy distribution event at the Caribbean K-8 Center, bringing joy to children and families in need during the holiday season.

The event allowed Saint Brendan students to play an active role in making a difference in their community, as they distributed toys and brought smiles to countless young faces. This meaningful initiative not only provided much-needed support to local families but also reinforced the values of compassion and service that are at the core of Saint Brendan High School's mission.

By engaging in projects like this, Saint Brendan High School continues to instill a sense of responsibility and empathy in its students, empowering them to make a positive impact on the world around them.



Miami Arts Studio Band Shines on International Stage in London

The Miami Arts Studio (MAS) Band recently showcased their musical talents on an international platform by performing at St. John's Waterloo in London. This performance marked the ensemble's inaugural international appearance, highlighting the dedication and skill of both the students and their instructors.

The journey to London was filled with anticipation and excitement. The band members, along with their director, prepared extensively for this opportunity to represent their school and community abroad. Their performance in the historic venue of St. John's Waterloo was met with enthusiasm, leaving a lasting impression on the audience and providing the students with invaluable experience on a global stage.

This international performance underscores MAS's commitment to providing its students with exceptional opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. By participating in such prestigious events, students gain cultural exposure, enhance their performance skills, and build confidence as young artists.

The MAS Band's successful London performance is a testament to the school's dedication to excellence in arts education, inspiring students to pursue their passions and achieve new heights in their artistic endeavors.











St. Thomas Episcopal Parish School: Fostering Social-Emotional Growth Through Play

At St. Thomas Episcopal Parish School, preschool and kindergarten playgroups focus on social-emotional learning (SEL), helping young students develop essential skills like teamwork, active listening, self-regulation, problem-solving, and emotional awareness. Led by School Counselor Luciana De Benedictis and Learning Support Facilitator Eileen Rodriguez, these sessions provide a fun, supportive environment for emotional and social development.

Luciana and Eileen recently shared their innovative playgroup initiative with educators at the SAIS Academic Support Conference in Charlotte, showcasing how St. Thomas Episcopal is leading the way in educating the whole child. Through these playgroups, the school continues to prioritize both academic and emotional growth in its students.







Archbishop Coleman Carroll Students Give Back at VIP Foundation

In September 2024, students from Archbishop Coleman Carroll High School visited the VIP Foundation in Homestead for a day of service, dedicating their time and energy to making a difference. They worked together to maintain the property, feed the animals, and prepare the space for an upcoming event benefiting individuals with special needs.

Their efforts not only helped create a welcoming environment for the event but also gave them hands-on experience in community service. While cleaning, organizing, and caring for the animals, students gained a deeper understanding of the impact small acts of kindness can have on those in need.

The VIP Foundation is grateful for their hard work and commitment and looks forward to continuing this meaningful partnership in the future.











From Games to Smiles: Father's Field Day at **Divine Savior Academy**

Divine Savior Academy in Doral hosted an unforgettable Father's Field Day, where dads and their children came together for a fun-filled afternoon. The event featured exciting games like relay races, tug-of-war, and obstacle courses, allowing families to bond through friendly competition and lots of laughter.

Beyond the games, Father's Field Day celebrated the special role fathers play in their children's lives, creating an opportunity for quality time and unforgettable memories. The energy was contagious, with dads showing their superhero strength and kids cheering their fathers on with enthusiasm.

It was a heartwarming reminder of the powerful family connections that shape our community. Father's Field Day was not only a day of fun but also a celebration of love, teamwork, and the superheroes in our lives. The smiles and joy shared will surely be remembered until next year's event.

Spreading Joy and Love: VIP Foundation's Holiday Traditions

At the VIP Foundation in Homestead, we believe that the holiday season is a time to come together and spread love and joy throughout our community. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to host our annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, the 4th Annual Trunk or Treat for Halloween, and our Annual Christmas Event—each of which brings light and hope to those in need.













During the Thanksgiving Food Drive, we focus on giving back to families from foster programs and Title 1 Migrant Schools. This special event allows us to ensure that families facing hardship are able to enjoy a warm, fulfilling meal, bringing a sense of comfort and togetherness during a time when they need it most. It's an opportunity for us to show the importance of gratitude and community support.

Our Halloween Trunk or Treat is a celebration of fun and inclusion. Volunteers decorate their cars, and children of all backgrounds—especially those from underserved communities—can enjoy a safe and exciting trick-or-treating experience. It's not just about candy, but about creating a joyful, carefree experience for children who might otherwise miss out on these cherished traditions. The event serves as a reminder of how important it is to create lasting memories and spread smiles, no matter the circumstances.

The Christmas Event holds a special place in our hearts. With face painting, a trackless train, snow, and a visit from Santa, we create a magical experience for children and families. This event is not just about receiving gifts but about fostering a sense of belonging and joy. With the toy drive and activities, we strive to make Christmas a little brighter for those who may be struggling. It's a time to remind our community that love, kindness, and generosity should be shared year-round, but especially during the holiday season.

These events wouldn't be possible without the incredible volunteers, donors, and community organizations that come together to make the holidays shine brighter for so many. We are truly thankful for the outpouring of support and the opportunity to create meaningful experiences for individuals and families in need. As we celebrate the holiday season, we are reminded of the power of spreading love and joy—and how much these small acts of kindness can truly make a difference in someone's life.



Nicklaus Children's Hospital

Making a Difference: Thanksgiving Gift Baskets for Kids at Nicklaus Children's Hospital



Instagram: @hearts4kidscare

As a Senior at Divine Savior Academy, Isabella Masdeu is already making a difference as a dedicated volunteer and aspiring medical professional. Every week Isabella spends much of her time giving back to the community through her role at Nicklaus Children's Hospital. Whether assisting with daily operations, preparing the hospital for special events, or providing reassurance to young patients, her commitment to service is evident in everything she does.

This Thanksgiving, Isabella expanded her impact by organizing a community project to deliver 20 holiday gift baskets to children with chronic health conditions. She partnered with VIP305 to encourage more people to contribute to purchasing items for her Thanksgiving Gift Baskets Project. This collaboration allowed her to gather the necessary resources to provide thoughtfully filled baskets to families in need during the holiday season. Isabella's leadership turned an idea into a reality, brightening the holiday season for families undergoing a difficult time. Her efforts, rooted in empathy and a desire to make the world better, reflect her bright future as both a community leader and a future medical professional.





Discovering the Beauty of Giving

For Isabella Masdeu, giving is more than an act of kindness—it's a way of life. As a high school student balancing a rigorous academic schedule with advanced biomedical courses, Isabella dedicates her free time to making a difference in her community. Through her volunteer work at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, she has found purpose and fulfillment in helping others. From ensuring hospital operations run smoothly to offering smiles and comfort to young patients, Isabella's contributions have touched countless lives.







Gulliver Prep Showcases Talent at Inaugural Art Walk Festival











Gulliver Preparatory School proudly hosted its first-ever Art Walk Festival, an extraordinary celebration of creativity and talent that brought together students, alumni, parents, and the wider community. The Judith Davidson Atrium was transformed into a stunning showcase of student artwork, with displays extending into the surrounding areas, while the first floor of the new Academic Building highlighted remarkable pieces by alumni and parents.

The festival's live performances by students in grades 4-12 stole the show, featuring music, dance, and theater that dazzled audiences throughout the day. A special alumni musical performance added a nostalgic and heartwarming touch to the event. Guests of all ages enjoyed hands-on arts and crafts workshops, joined in a collaborative sidewalk art project, and contributed to a large canvas masterpiece led by Gulliver alumnus and featured artist Vic Garcia '08.

The energy extended outdoors to the Sean Taylor '01 Memorial Field, where a lively drum circle brought families together in rhythm and celebration. The return of the Gulliver Marketplace was a crowd favorite, showcasing unique treasures and local creations.

The day concluded with a burst of excitement and color as participants took part in an unforgettable Color Run. The Art Walk Festival was a remarkable reflection of Gulliver Prep's commitment to fostering creativity, community, and lifelong connections.





PATHWAY TO COLLEGE SUCCESS

Pathway to College Success: Empowering Parents for a Stronger Future

The "Pathway to College Success" program was a collaborative effort, created equally by Amarette and Yessika, founders of Very Important Purpose (VIP), Alejandra, a College Financial Aid Consultant, and Carlos, a University of Miami professor. Together, we launched this program with one goal: to empower parents with the tools and knowledge they need to navigate the college application process.

With our combined experience in community service, financial aid, and academic success, we crafted a program that addresses the key elements of college preparation. Amarette and Yessika, with their expertise in guiding students and organizing community service, emphasize the importance of service hours in college applications. Alejandra contributes her financial aid expertise, while Carlos Quintana brings insights into academic success.

Our first free presentation provided parents with valuable information on financial aid, scholarships, college essays, and navigating the application process, all while stressing the critical role of community service in building a strong college application.

We are excited to continue offering these presentations and working together to empower families on their journey toward college success.

Events with a Purpose:

Pickleball Tournament & Gala Night

At Very Important Purpose (VIP), we're excited to announce two upcoming events that will bring our community together and support our foundation's future initiatives. Both events aim to raise funds for a transformative project that will benefit the special needs community through expanded programs and accessible facilities at the VIP Foundation.

Pickleball with a Purpose Fundraiser Tournament

Grab your paddles and join us for the Pickleball with a Purpose Fundraiser Tournament! Whether you're a seasoned player or just starting out, this event is the perfect mix of fun, fitness, and giving back.



Event Details:

When: **Saturday, March 23, 2025**
Time: **Starting at 10:00 AM**
Where: **The Yards Amelia in Hialeah**

What to Expect:

- ☑ Competitive and recreational brackets to suit all skill levels.
- ☑ Friendly competition with a community-focused atmosphere.
- ☑ Prizes, refreshments, and a chance to connect with others who are passionate about making a difference.

Why It Matters:

Proceeds from the tournament will directly fund the creation of a handicap-accessible bathroom and shelter at the VIP Foundation. These additions are essential to our goal of providing a more inclusive and welcoming environment for individuals with special needs and their families.

Mark your calendars and don't miss this chance to make an impact while enjoying a day of pickleball fun!

Sponsor the Pickleball Tournamnet

VIP Gala: A Night with Purpose

Get ready for an unforgettable evening at the VIP Gala: A Night with Purpose! This elegant event is not just a celebration but a meaningful opportunity to support the growth of the VIP Foundation.

Event Details:

When: **Saturday, May 10, 2025**
Time: **7PM to Midnight**
Where: **Big Five Club**

What's in Store:

- ☑ Premium drinks and delicious food to indulge in.
- ☑ A live band, dancing, and entertainment to keep the night lively.
- ☑ A chance to connect with other supporters in a beautiful, sophisticated setting.

Why It Matters:

Funds raised from the gala will contribute to the same initiative as the pickleball tournament — creating a handicap-accessible bathroom and shelter at the VIP Foundation. These updates are vital to expanding our programs and ensuring we can better serve the special needs community.

Performance by EA Musica



Scan to Attend & Sponsor Gala QR

The Future of the VIP Foundation

Both events are part of our larger vision to create programs that uplift and empower individuals with special needs. Accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of our mission, and with your support, we can make this dream a reality.

Join us for these exciting events and be part of the change we're creating together. Whether you're competing on the pickleball court or dancing the night away at the gala, your participation will make a lasting difference in the lives of so many.

Let's rally for a purpose and celebrate with meaning — we can't wait to see you there!

CARROLLTON
SCHOOL OF THE SACRED HEART

Embracing Hope: **Carrollton Upper School** Students Serve with Heart on Service Day

On Service Day, Carrollton Upper School students embraced the theme for the Jubilee Holy Year, "Pilgrims of Hope," by dedicating their time and energy to serving organizations across Miami. The day allowed these students to put their faith into action, making a meaningful impact on local communities.

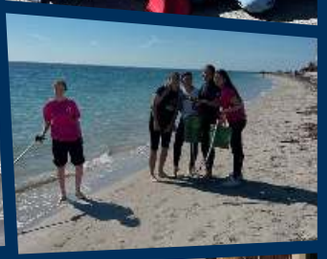
The students volunteered at several incredible organizations, including Barnyard, Centro Mater, Miami Learning Experience, The Kampong, and The WOW Center. They brightened the lives of elderly residents at St. Anne's Nursing Home, assisted children at local schools, and worked at conservation sites like The Kampong. These acts of service showcased their commitment to the Sacred Heart Goals and the values of kindness, empathy, and love.

The students' dedication to service and their embodiment of hope left a lasting impact on the organizations they worked with, reflecting the spirit of the Sacred Heart community.

Gratitude is extended to the organizations that partnered with Carrollton to make Service Day a success. Their collaboration helped turn this day of giving back into something truly meaningful.











conchita
ESPINOSA ACADEMY



Conchita Espinosa Academy 4th Graders Bring Florida History to Life in St. Augustine!

The 4th-grade class of Conchita Espinosa Academy (CEA) brought their Florida history lessons to life with an unforgettable trip to St. Augustine! After months of studying the Sunshine State's rich history, students explored the historic old town, visited the legendary Fountain of Youth, and experienced hands-on learning at the Old Florida Museum.

This immersive journey allowed students to connect with the history they've been studying, creating lifelong memories as they walked through landmarks and experienced Florida's past firsthand. It was a day filled with discovery, learning, and excitement—a perfect culmination of their yearlong dive into Florida history!

Special Corner



Meet Adrian!

Adrian is a joyful, energetic young man with Down syndrome who brings love, strength, and happiness wherever he goes. Despite facing health challenges, including thyroid complications, Adrian has shown incredible resilience in overcoming them, always maintaining his bright smile and positive attitude. We first met Adrian at our Halloween event in October 2024, and since then, we've had the pleasure of seeing him at nearly every event. It warms our hearts to see the joy on his and his mom's faces as he participates and brings his infectious energy to everything he does. Whether dancing with his Genes dance group, sharing his signature merengue moves, or simply making friends, Adrian's spirit and love for life shine brightly.

What are some of Adrian's favorite hobbies or activities?
Adrian loves plays, theater shows, and especially dancing with his friends. He looks forward to Saturdays with his Genes dance group, where he's even created his own signature merengue move—ask him to show you!

What makes Adrian shine?
Adrian is the ultimate "Selfie King Pin!" You'll never meet anyone with more selfies than him. He's also a one-stop party guy who brings joy wherever he goes.

Can you share a heartwarming moment with Adrian?
Adrian is incredibly giving. He loves surprising people with gifts, often asking to buy flowers and candies for his teachers or those he appreciates.

What challenges has Adrian overcome?
One of Adrian's biggest challenges was stabilizing his thyroid condition, which fluctuated between hypo- and hyperthyroidism. After undergoing radioactive iodine treatment, his thyroid levels are now stable, improving his energy, heart health, and overall well-being.

How has Down syndrome shaped Adrian's journey?
Adrian's presence has fostered patience and understanding within the community. While his speech may not always reflect it, he has a deep understanding of situations and concepts.

What are Adrian's dreams, and how can the community support him?
Adrian strives for independence and meaningful social connections. He hopes to continue growing in the plans that God has for him and his family.

What advice do you have for families beginning their journey with Down syndrome?
Be 100% involved! I was called a "helicopter mom" when Adrian was in kindergarten, and I have no regrets. Parents should always pay attention to what they sign, especially regarding services like therapies, HHA, and evaluations.

What does a typical day look like for Adrian?
Adrian loves getting dressed, brushing his teeth, styling his hair, and wearing cologne. He always makes sure he's looking his best!

Who are Adrian's biggest supporters?
His biggest role model is his dad, Heri, who has been by his side since 2004. They're inseparable—best friends, work partners, and "hermanitos." They love going to Home Depot, singing in the truck, and working together on job sites.

What is one of Adrian's proudest accomplishments?
Watching him graduate high school in his cap and gown was an unforgettable moment. He successfully completed his K-12 journey and is now preparing for his next chapter as a young adult.

How has Adrian turned challenges into strengths?
I used to worry if people would understand him, but he's proven me wrong! At restaurants and cafes, he confidently orders exactly what he wants. He's also learning to use Apple Pay through Pucho & Pals' social group.

What event does Adrian look forward to every year?
His birthday dance party!
This year, he'll be 25!

How does Adrian build meaningful relationships?
Adrian's laugh is contagious! He's fun, silly, and deeply caring. He never forgets his friends and always loves spending time with them.

Can you share a moment when Adrian made someone's day?
While waiting in a long bank line, Adrian befriended an elderly lady. They laughed, sang, and talked the whole time, making the experience enjoyable for everyone around them.

What are some of Adrian's favorite things?
He loves eating out at Flanigan's, Fuddruckers, and IHOP. Orlando theme parks are his go-to for a quick getaway!

How would Adrian describe himself in three words?
Resilient, lovable, humorous.

How has Adrian changed your life?
Loving my son has never been a struggle. He keeps me going through everything.

What does Adrian's smile mean to you?
His happiness means I'm fulfilling my purpose as his mom—to keep him safe, healthy, and loved.

What's one thing you want people to remember about Adrian's story?
Caring for Adrian requires effort, but he has overcome incredible odds and continues to amaze me. Like many individuals with special needs, he faces challenges—but the blessings far outweigh them.











Celebrating Latin Grammys


FEATURE DECEMBER 2024

CELEBRATING LATIN GRAMMYS

SENIORS, ASHLEY MARTINEZ AND MARIA GONZALEZ ALVAREZ.

The 24th Annual Latin Grammy Awards, held on November 16, 2024, in Miami, Florida, was a celebration of Latin music's diversity and impact. The night featured dazzling performances and monumental wins that left fans buzzing. At International Studies Preparatory Academy (ISPA), students had plenty to say about the results, from long-awaited victories to record-breaking achievements.

Senior Ashley Martinez, was thrilled to see Group Frontera take home the award for Best Norteña Music Album. Known for their heartfelt lyrics and traditional sound, the group's win felt like a breakthrough for regional Mexican music. "It's so good to see norteña music getting the attention it deserves," Ashley said.

"This kind of music is often overlooked, but their win shows how powerful and important it is to [Mexican] culture." Ashley believes their victory will inspire younger generations to embrace and celebrate regional Mexican music.

Meanwhile, senior Maria Gonzalez Alvarez, praised Karol G for her three major wins: Best Urban Music Album, Best Fusion/Urban Performance, and the coveted Album of the Year for Mañana Sera Bonito.

Maria noted that Karol G's earlier work often leaned on catchy, fun tracks that didn't explore deeper themes.

"This album felt different," Maria said. "She really deepened her identity, touching on love, heartbreak, and self-discovery in a way that's both personal and universal." Maria shared how the album's emotional depth and authenticity showed a whole new side of Karol G.

The Latin Grammys sparked lively discussions among ISPA students, reflecting the broad appeal and deep cultural impact of Latin music. Whether celebrating Grupo Frontera's representation of regional traditions or Karol G's dominance in the urban genre, the awards served as a reminder of music's ability to unite and inspire.

GROUP FRONTERA AND SINGER, KAROL G.

ANDINA
Driving School • Est. 1991 •

Hit the Road This Spring Break 2025!

Rev up your spring break with our specially designed driving school programs. Whether you're a beginner or looking to sharpen your skills, our expert instructors and flexible schedules are here to get you cruising with confidence. Learn from certified instructors who specialize in road test preparation.

SERVICES

· Intensive Courses: Perfect for spring break timing.
· Tailored Lessons: From basic maneuvers to advanced techniques.
· Written Test: prep-class, tutor, and test on the computer.
· Road Test: 2 attempts, vehicle, examiner, & driver's license.
· Friendly Instructors: Safety and enjoyment in every lesson.
· Flexible Scheduling: Make your driving dreams fit your vacation plans.

$25 OFF
when you mention VIP 305 Miami

@andinadrivingschool www.andinadrivingschool.com info@andinadrivingschool.com

HunterDouglas



Make the most of this season's daylight and save with Hunter Douglas Window Shadings.

Decosol
window coverings & automation systems

DECOSOL INC.
8000 NW 31st ST., Suite 2
DORAL FL 33122
305-310-2589
DECOSOLMIAMI.COM

*Manufacturer's mail-in rebate offer valid for qualifying purchases made January 18–March 31, 2025, from participating dealers in the U.S. only. Offer excludes HDOrigins® and Nantucket™ Window Shadings, a collection of Silhouette® Window Shadings. Rebate will be issued as a Virtual Reward Card and emailed within 6 weeks of rebate claim approval. Subject to applicable law, a $3.00 monthly fee will be assessed against card balance 12 months after card issuance and each month thereafter. See complete terms distributed with Virtual Reward Card. Additional limitations may apply. Ask participating dealers for details and rebate form. ©2025 Hunter Douglas. All rights reserved. All trademarks used herein are the property of Hunter Douglas or their respective owners. Orders with more than 10 shades will only be awarded a rebate for the first 10 shades, for a total rebate cap of $750. Orders with fewer than 4 shades will not be awarded any rebate.

POSTERS LOGO FORMS PACKAGE
GRAPHIC DESIGN BRAND FLYERS
ADVERTISING STATIONERY PRINT
SOCIAL MEDIA MOTION GRAPHIC
LABELS PROMOTIONALS BANNER
PHOTOGRAPHY 3D LETTER SIGNS
EMBROIDERY T-SHIRT POSTCARD
STORE FRONT UNIFORMS FLAGS
INSTALLATION CATALOGS WRAPS
MOBILE APPS TAG AI SIGNCADES
MARKETING SIGNALS BROCHURE
INVITATIONS BUSINESS CARD AD
MAGAZINE ROLL UP WEB DESIGN
ICONS CHANNEL LETTER STAMPS
BRANDING LETTERHEAD STICKER
PRESENTATION FOLDER IDENTITY

DESIGN
PRINT
INSTALL
REPEAT

786.393.8945 / 786.521.5950
2182 NW 26 Ave. Miami FL 33142
bdcreativestudio.com
f bdcreativestudio

bd

SKINTIQUE

MIAMI | EST. 1999

CLINIQUE & BOUTIQUE



Delivering Transforming Results with Science and Nature

SKINTIQUEMIAMI.COM

ONE VILLAGE PLACE - MERRICK PARK | 4100 SALZEDO ST #7 | CORAL GABLES, FL 33146 | 305-569-0612

WORLDWIDE TRANSPORTATION

OUR TEAM OF LOGISTICS EXPERTS IS ON CALL TO HANDLE ALL YOUR INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING NEEDS.

GM INTERNATIONAL
FREIGHT FORWARDERS CORP.

NEW LOCATION:
7517 NW 52ND ST
MIAMI, FL 33166

PHONE: 305-599-7924 **/** 1-877-674-1121
INSTAGRAM: @GMFREIGHT **FACEBOOK:** GMFREIGHTUSA

GMFREIGHT.COM
INFO@GMFREIGHT.COM

Printed Advertising in the Magazine

- 24 Page Magazine (9in. x 12in.)
- Circulation: 10,000 copies
- Marketing & distribution channels: Stores/ businesses/ schools
- District: Dade-County Region
- Free distribution

Social Media Optimization

- Social Media Setup (Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube)
- Develop Fan Page
- Daily Social Media Updates (5 Days a Week)
- Feeds Social Networking Sites

Party Package

- Start to finish Event Planning
- Social Media Coverage
- Cover Page in our next Issue
- Photobooth Set Up
- Character Visits & Stilt Walkers
- Hora Loca and so much more!

VIP Pep Rally

- VIP Pep Squad
- Photographer
- Social Media Coverage
- Full Page in our next Issue
- Host
- Special Guests

Events and activities

- Give your business the right exposure by attending our monthly events
- Sponsors and Donors are always welcomed! Advertise with your company banners, brochures, and other promotional items.

Party Supplies

- Foam Machines
- Bubble Machines
- Smoke Machines
- Party Supplies
- Decor and so much more!

Volunteers & Interns

Are you a company or non-profit who needs teen volunteers or interns? Work with us and we will find the best candidates for you! Are you a teen in need of community service hours? Keep up with our monthly events for chances to receive community service hours.

Contact us at **info@vip-305.com**

VIP SUMMER SERVICE PROJECT

VIP announces our 7th Annual Sleep-Away Summer Camp Service Project. For more information contact us at **info@vip-305.com**

LAST CHANCE TO BOOK!

Happy Holidays Travel

ROYAL CARIBBEAN







2025 QUINCES & SWEET 16'S SUMMER CRUISE SCHEDULE

- July 5, 2025 (Saturday)
Icon of the Seas – 7-Night Western Caribbean
Departure: Miami
Destinations: Costa Maya, Roatán, Cozumel & Cococay

- July 12, 2025 (Saturday)
Oasis of the Seas – 8-Night Southern Caribbean
Departure: Ft. Lauderdale
Destinations: Cococay, Cabo Rojo, Aruba & Curaçao

- July 20, 2025 (Sunday)
Oasis of the Seas – 6-Night Western Caribbean
Departure: Ft. Lauderdale
Destinations: Cococay, Falmouth & Labadee

- July 26, 2025 (Saturday)
Oasis of the Seas – 8-Night Eastern Caribbean
Departure: Ft. Lauderdale
Destinations: St. Kitts, St. Maarten, St. Thomas & Cococay

- July 27, 2025 (Sunday)
Odyssey of the Seas – 7-Night Eastern Mediterranean
Departure: Rome
Destinations: Santorini, Ephesus, Mykonos & Naples

2026 VIP List NOW OPEN!

www.hhtcruises.com 305-267-4004 8160 Coral Way, Miami, Florida 33155