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Welsh managed to put both feet in his mouth

BY GRANT MILLER

Publisher



Only a person with a big problem would pick a fight with the Girl Scouts. Bob Welsh recently accused the Girl Scouts of being “too white.” Now Welsh is under fire for his own racial insensitivity regarding the Girl Scouts.

The South Miami City Commission recently undertook a piece of legislation that would have given them the right to do a top-to-bottom inspection of The Little House. The property, which is located at 6609 SW 60 St., in a quiet residential neighborhood, includes two acres, nature trails, a house with meeting areas and restrooms with showers. There’s a fire pit out back. It’s the site of the Girls Scouts of Tropical Florida annual summer camp, as well as other functions throughout the years.

The Girl Scouts are a uniquely American institution. They were founded by Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia in March 1912. In a world that told women that there were so many things they couldn’t do, Low wanted girls to be able to explore the possibilities that the world around them had in store for them.



BOB WELSH

Under Low, the Girl Scouts did things that some thought should have been reserved for boys. They hiked. They swam. They played sports like basketball, camped in the woods, and learned to tell time by the stars. Today, the Girl Scouts have 50 million alumni all across the world and 3.2 million active

Friendship Circle Miami hosts most successful Walk-A-Thon to date



WALKING 4 FRIENDSHIP WALK-A-THON PARTICIPANTS POSE FOR A PHOTO.

(See story inside)

girl and adult members.

What the Girl Scouts excel at is teaching young women to be leaders. In a world that too often tells girls “No you can’t”, the Girl Scouts not only tell them “Yes, you can”, but “We’re going to show you how.”

Girls in our society face enormous pressures. Depression and body image issues afflict too many young women. While suicide is rare, a recent national study showed that about 18 percent of American high school girls have thought about it. Obesity rates are climbing for girls of all ethnic groups. Teen pregnancies have declined in

recent years, but are still alarmingly high.

What Bob Welsh claimed is nonsense. The Girl Scouts are open to every girl, regardless of her race or ethnicity, and now open to boys as well. When it comes to religion, they’re more progressive than the Boy Scouts of America. The Girl Scouts do not have any requirement of faith or belief and admit girls of any or no religious belief or doctrine, regardless of the presence or absence of belief in a God or comparable higher power.

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Around Town

Renaissance of South Miami is underway

BY MICHAEL MILLER

Executive Editor

It was only a few months ago that a casual walk down Sunset Drive would bring tears to your eyes. Even the least observant passerby couldn’t miss the 10 or more closed and empty storefronts lining the streets. But alas, there appears to be good news on the horizon. If you take a look at 5855 Sunset Drive, you’ll see signs of a new business coming soon – by the name of Club Pilates. It’s bound to be a terrific addition to the eclectic mix of businesses in the area. And let’s not forget that Shelley’s is just east of there with a huge sign proclaiming “NOW OPEN.” Just across the



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Friendship Circle Miami hosts most successful Walk-A-Thon to date



BY JOANNA PALMER

“Acceptance,” “Humbleness,” “Honesty,” “Trust,” “Togetherness” and “Loyalty” – these are just a few of the answers written on a giant chalkboard along the 3K walk route that asked, “What is Friendship?”

On Sunday, March 18th, the Friendship Circle Miami hosted their annual Walking 4 Friendship Walk-a-Thon with a record number of more than 1,000 participants. A total of \$115,332 was raised that will help fund local programs aimed at enhancing social function, inclusion, and friendship in children with special needs.

The Friendship Circle empowers children and young adults with disabilities, including autism, to develop proficiencies in areas

such as art, music, sports, and overall life skills. Each participant is paired with a typical teen volunteer who stays with them throughout the course of the program, helping to foster friendships and acceptance among all.

Top fundraising teams this year included Todd Ruderman and family who raised more than \$29,000; Joe Roisman and family who raised more than \$12,000; and Bob Josefsberg who raised more than \$10,000. The top teen volunteer fundraiser was Samantha Kaz who raised more than \$2,800 on her own.

Friendship Circle participant Inyaki Perez Iturbe accepted the top fundraising award on behalf of Mr. Ruderman. “It is people like you who help ensure that children, teens and young adults like myself enjoy friendship and acceptance,” proclaimed Perez. “Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Friendship Circle rocks and you rock.”

The fun-filled event kicked off with a warm-up for the walk by yoga teacher and volunteer, Brandy, who had some assistance from Sebastian, the University of Miami Ibis. The walk commenced shortly after all participants sang the Star-Spangled Banner while Sam Sax, the father of an alum of the Friendship Circle, flew his plane overhead. The Bahamas Junkanoo Band, Sebastian the Ibis and Burnie, the Miami Heat mascot, accompanied all participants during the walk, keeping them motivated and on beat! Along the walk were different stations with fun activities such as the aforementioned chalk board defining friendship and a stress-ball making station.

Audrey Raska Phillips, mother to one of the Friendship Circle participants, noted on Facebook, “A calm came more than my son. The sun was shining, the sky was blue and there we were, amidst so many stellar peo-



It was a good time for all.

ple, families, and volunteers. The Friendship Circle is a place where unexpected friendships flourish and no judgements are made, and that’s just, well, priceless.”

After the walk, participants were treated to an exciting carnival with activities such as a rock climbing wall, a 4-station bungee, dual Zorb race track, a bounce house, and face painting. Walkers re-fueled up on hot dogs, burgers, soda, popcorn, cotton candy and more! Performances included Kia Kidz, the Coconut Grove Ballet, the Danny Wheeler Band, LEAP and the Friendship Circle’s very own band comprised of program participants. Parents were also able to access information on resources available in the community such as CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disorders), Atlantis Academy, Coalition of Mental Health, First Steps Intervention, Kids Chat and other vendors.

One in every 68 children in the U.S. has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a 30 percent increase from one in 88 merely two years ago, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Children with ASD often have severe deficits in social skills and verbal communication, which can make social interactions challenging.

“At The Friendship Circle, part of our mission is to heighten the community’s awareness, sensitivity, and sense of responsibility to individuals with special needs,” said Nechama Harlig, program director.

Anyone who wishes to make an impact through a donation can still do so by visiting <walking4friendship.com>. For more information on the Friendship Circle programs or volunteer opportunities, call 305-234-5654 or visit online at <friendshipcirclemiami.org>.

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— Nechama Harlig,
program director