

GALT MILE NEWS

JUNE 2009

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GMCA

Caribe | Commodore | Coral Ridge Towers | Coral Ridge Towers E | Coral Ridge Towers N | Coral Ridge Towers S | Edgewater Arms | Fountainhead | Galleon | Galt Ocean Club | L'Ambiance | L'Hermitage



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COMMISSIONER ROBERTS THANKS VOTERS

****In his first Newsletter to District 1 constituents, City Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts expresses appreciation for his seat on the Fort Lauderdale City Commission. Acknowledging that 4 of the 5 municipal representatives are neophytes, he observes that the Commission's new complexion signifies that the voters were exclaiming their predisposition for change. In a refreshing declaration, Commissioner Roberts admits that while he may not be able to expeditiously answer certain concerns expressed by constituents, he intends to explore these issues with District 1 residents in hopes of arriving at a mutually acceptable resolution.***

Focusing on his thirty-five years of public service, our new commissioner identifies citizen participation as the catalyst for progress. Drawing on his extensive experience with safety and security issues cultivated during his long and distinguished career as a local law enforcement icon, Roberts characterizes Public Safety as the cornerstone of civilization. He correctly points out that human communities initially coalesced to more effectively protect themselves. After promising to exploit his law enforcement experience for the benefit of the entire city, he targets the City's greatest challenge, how to make one dollar pay for two dollars worth of services.

Cutting to the chase, Roberts explains that the Commission's first meeting directed "the City Manager to freeze current fiscal year expenditures, except for public safety, with the goal to carry forward savings into next year's budget." This directive will allow new Mayor Jack Seiler adequate time to institute his plan for a zero-based budgeting policy. It also was the first official interaction between Commissioner Roberts and City Manager George Gretsas since Roberts' election.

During his campaign, Roberts stated he would work productively with Gretsas with the understanding that Gretsas would address the new commission's priorities. Since the election, both City officials have agreed to bury any residual controversy and wrestle through tough budget issues together. Many Galt Mile residents initially expressed concern about candidate Roberts' motives for aspiring to the District 1 Commission seat. Upon hearing of Roberts' post-election public commitment, they were relieved to learn that Roberts was willing to sacrifice any alleged personal agenda in favor of steering the District - and the city - through the ongoing economic crunch.
- [editor]*



City Commissioner Bruce Roberts

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PUBLISHER

Second Studio, LLC
954-292-6553
2ndstudios@gmail.com

EDITOR

Eric Peter Berkowitz

ADVERTISING

954-292-6553
galtnews@yahoo.com

PRINTER

The UPS StoreSM
954-568-1990

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COVER PHOTO CONTRIBUTIONS

Judy Calufetti, EWM Real Estate
954-646-1437

Carl Marzola, Atlantic Properties
954-564-8182

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2009 GALT OCEAN MILE FOOD DRIVE

By Eric Berkowitz



Final Results

The 2009 Galt Mile Food Drive was over. In keeping with tradition, Cooperative Feeding Program Executive Director Scott Woodburn sent emails to the participants. The CFP sparkplug notified team captains, Association volunteers and other local program supporters that the recent drive was an unqualified success. Initially concerned about the economic downturn's impact on donations, Woodburn seemed relieved by the final results.

The email opened "Thanks to all, for your efforts in producing a records setting Food Drive. Not too many folks showed up to celebrate the successful food drive competition." Turning the focus to the event's competitive underpinnings, he continued, "Congratulations once again to our repeat Grand Champions the Edgewater Arms. I have attached the final results, please share with your board and president."

He explained why the annual effort was being shifted to a different - hopefully more productive - month, "Considering the results, I think we will keep the month of March as our Official Galt Ocean Mile Food Drive Month. Thanks again and we'll see you again next year." The email carried two attachments, a letter entitled, "The Final Note" and an Excel spreadsheet compilation of the final statistical summary - "Final Results". The letter, fueled by hope and infused with enthusiasm, is as follows:

The Galt Ocean Mile Food Drive Final Note

WOW, who would have thought, a record setting year for the 2009 Galt Ocean Mile Food Drive. We set a goal of 15,000 lbs and for all intent and purpose we did it! Super congratulations to all our condo participants for a wonderful record setting effort in our 2009 Food Drive.

Our 2009 Galt Ocean Mile GRAND CHAMPIONS for the second year in a row is the Edgewater Cooperative Association. What can you say about that wonderful group at the Edgewater Co-op Association? The smallest among us, with just 85 cooperative units, the Edgewater just blew away the competition again this year with an astounding effort accumulating 3,658 total points and averaging a magnificent 43 points per unit.

Congratulations to Annemarie Adams, the co-op campaign Captain, the Co-op Association Board, and the residents who made the fight against hunger in their community a personal campaign.

Continued on page 6

In the past several years the Cooperative Feeding Program has distributed millions of meals to Broward County residents. They are staunch advocates for parity funding for those with disabilities, the elderly, and persons with mental illness.

“ Super congratulations to all our condo participants for a wonderful record setting effort in our 2009 Food Drive. ”

Food..Continued

Congratulations to the Coral Ridge Group. Coral Ridge Towers South hung in there second in total points followed by Coral Ridge Towers Original who was in a fight with up-comer Southpoint under first time leader Rebecca Olshan. She sure made Bonnie Leavitt of Coral Ridge Towers Original sweat it out.

Jim Rainey's, Coral Ridge East group was solid again followed by our second smallest association the Fountainhead under Jennifer Donnelly. You have got to watch out for those smaller Associations. They stay under the radar but in the end can make a huge impact. Jennifer got a big increase out of her residents and place 6th overall in total points and second in points per unit with 5.1. She also gets my high five for her food collection box decorations.

Following the Fountainhead was Cyndi Songer's Galt Towers and Rosie Bowers and her Playa del Mar Group separated by just 11 lbs. and then the Rivera, Galleon, Plaza South and Ocean Club, 9th, 10, 11, 12 & 13 place who were separated by just 50 lbs.

In the per unit category, no one could touch the 43 points per unit from the Edgewater but the Fountainhead followed in second with 5.1. Coral Ridge South's 4.5 and Bonnie Leavitt's Original's 3.2 were third and fourth. Things started to tighten up with Southpoint and the Rivera at 2.4 tied at fifth, then Coral Ridge East at 2.3 at 6th, the Galt Towers, seventh at 2.2 and a bunch at 2.1 points per unit.

Thank you for a great effort in making this Food Drive the best yet. Your efforts and donations will make a difference. Your donations will change lives. Your donations will save lives. What a great gift to your neighbors and community.

Imagine the difference we can make when we work together. We can work magic. Thanks for making this years food drive a record success.

Remember on this Tuesday, April 7 at the St Lawrence Gallery 5:30 to 7 p.m. will be our Food Drive celebration and we will crown our 2009 Grand Champion Edgewater plus every Condo Association will receive a food drive certificate of appreciation.

Scott A. Woodburn
CFP Development
954-629-7381
scott@feedingbroward.org



Collection Results (21 Participating Associations)

Total Lbs & \$\$\$ (Points)		Lbs & \$\$\$ per Unit	
Association	Total Points	Association	Points/Unit
*Edgewater Arms	3658.0	*Edgewater Arms	43.0
CRT South	1529.0	Fountainhead	5.1
CRT "Original"	1089.0	CRT South	4.5
Southpoint	970.5	CRT "Original"	3.2
CRT East	761.5	Southpoint	2.4
Fountainhead	648.5	Ocean Riviera	2.4
Galt Towers	565.0	CRT East	2.3
Playa del Mar	554.0	Galt Towers	2.2
Ocean Riviera	480.5	Regency South	2.1
The Galleon	450.0	Ocean Club	2.1
Plaza South	448.0	The Galleon	2.1
Ocean Club	435.0	Caribé	2.1
Regency South	430.0	Royal Ambassador	1.9
Playa del Sol	416.5	Playa Del Mar	1.5
Royal Ambassador	406.0	Plaza East	1.4
Plaza East	385.0	Regency Tower	1.4
Caribé	313.0	Plaza South	1.3
Regency Tower	283.0	Playa del Sol	1.1
Ocean Summit	262.0	Ocean Summit	1.1
Galt Ocean Club	140.0	Galt Ocean Club	0.7
Commodore	78.0	Commodore	0.4

Total Lbs Collected 14,316.0 Points

* GRAND CHAMPION

That's right! Our community contributed more than 7 tons of food and sundries to local families that are suffering through a tough time. The formula used to compare results assigns one point for each pound of food and/or sundries donated as well as one point for each dollar contributed. Your anonymous contributions will be held up as an example to other Broward neighborhoods, hopefully engendering an epidemic of generosity. Well ... perhaps a modest epidemic.

The Cooperative Feeding Program is headquartered at NW 33rd Terrace in Fort Lauderdale (on the N. W. corner of Broward Blvd. and NW 33rd Terrace). Call them at (954) 792-2328, fax them at (954) 792-9982 or send an email to info@feedingbroward.org. Office and Emergency Pantry hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. The Community Kitchen serves from 9 a.m. through 11 a.m., Monday through Saturday and Sundays from 11 a.m. through 12:30 p.m. •

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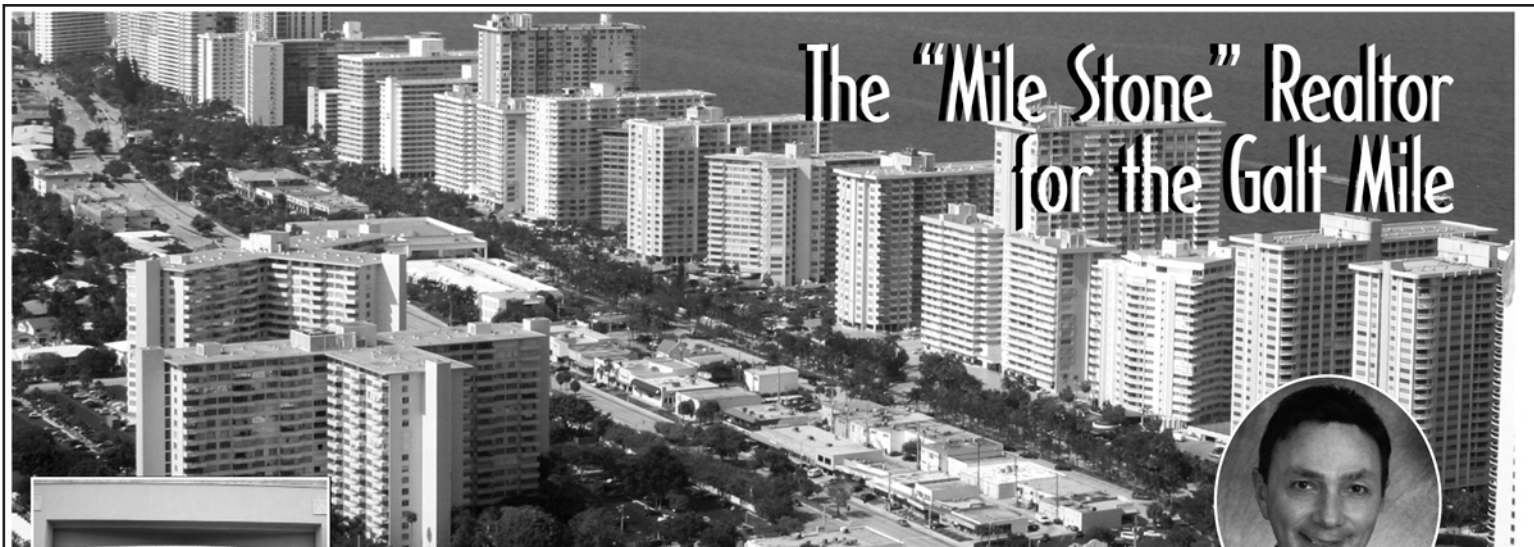
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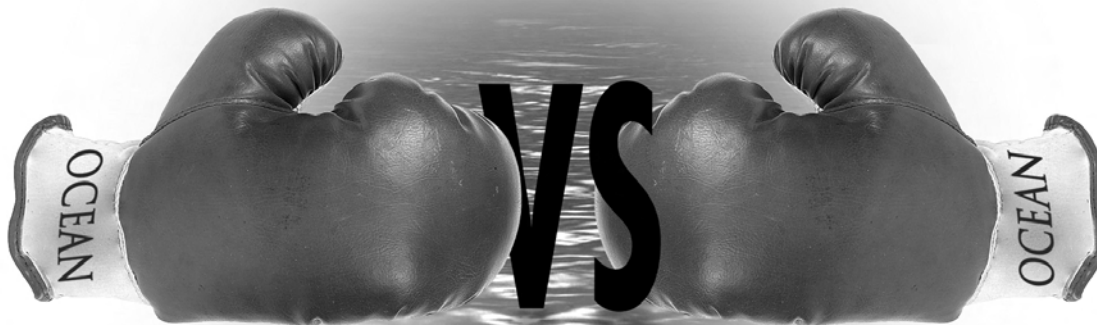


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FIGHT RAMPS UP FOR GALT OCEAN MILE READING CENTER



By Eric Berkowitz

The Galt Mile Reading Center serves as a portal to the world for literally thousands of local residents. Broward County's Herculean budget deficit has placed the tiny storefront branch of the huge Broward County Library System on the chopping block. In a frenetic marathon to offset the Property Appraiser's projected 15% drop in the County's tax base, County Commissioners are gouging away at libraries, parks, animal shelters and other "non-critical" services loosely characterized as "quality of life" expenses. County budget director Kayla Olsen projected the shortfall between \$135 million and \$160 million.

Along with the Galt Ocean Mile Reading Center in Fort Lauderdale, libraries scheduled for execution are the Beach Branch in Pompano Beach, the Hollywood Beach Library, the Riverland Library in Fort Lauderdale, the Pembroke Pines Library, the Century Plaza Library in Deerfield Beach and the Lauderdale Mall Library. The branch library on Sunrise Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale (not the ArtServe section) is also on deck for last rites. Operations at the County's 11 largest libraries that were cut from 70 to 58 hours a week last year will be further reduced to 48 hours a week this year. Special programs organized for all libraries are mere months away from the big sleep. The county plans to incrementally save \$5.7 million by breaking its decade-old 40-year contract with Nova Southeastern University to build and operate its Alvin Sherman Library.

Fueled by highly competitive commission districts perpetually pressing for parity, Broward's Library Division mirrors the county's big government spending environment. Its 37 libraries occupy 1.5 million square feet of space and cost the county \$65 million last year. It's the nation's largest library system and number 84 in terms of volumes held.

Budget Bites Broward

In April, District 4 Commissioner Ken Keechl extolled the Broward Commission for trimming \$90 million from the 2008 budget and \$87 million from the 2009 budget, shrinking the County's annual intake by \$177 million. He also complained that his colleagues were considering an adjustment to the Millage rate that would produce the same revenue as last year -

characterized as the "rolled-back" rate. Given the smaller tax base, the millage would have to be increased to yield the same intake. While he acknowledged that the strategy would cut another \$45 million from the Budget and increase the cumulative 3-year recurring tax savings to \$222 million, he expressed a preference for matching last year's millage rate, thereby dropping the County into a \$135 million black hole. The cumulative 3-year recurring tax savings would jump to \$312 million.

The problem is this. Cuts made over the past two years targeted many questionable projects and irresponsible spending strategies, the absence of which often went predictably unnoticed. Programs that were underutilized, ineffective or otherwise unjustifiable were expunged. Programs created to address issues that were no longer relevant were gratefully terminated. Projects that owed their survival to an inherent automatic annual refunding process withered when finally scrutinized. Simultaneously, the County Administration consolidated overlapping services and streamlined delivery to enhance fiscal efficiency. As such, many of the cuts were absorbed in stride.

In his Budget newsletter, Keechl summarized how the County underwrote the Budget cuts, stating, "We instituted a hiring freeze, which reduced operating expenses drastically. We reduced capital projects by prioritizing and funding 'needs' while postponing or eliminating 'wants'. We paid off certain debt (to lower yearly interest costs) and we minimally raised certain fees (which hadn't been reviewed or raised in more than 13 years!)"

With the pork mostly eviscerated during the previous reductions, cuts are starting to hit bone. When that happens, Commissioners must meticulously negotiate and then carefully explain lost services to their constituents, remitting assurances that the pain is being equitably shared. Since there is no reasonable standard for comparing resources received by a district's inhabitants versus their contributions, determining whether their losses compare favorably with those of residents in other districts is tantamount to catching smoke.

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Galt Mile Reading Center Becomes Target

Loss of the Galt Mile Reading Room would represent a gross inequity. In exchange for making huge annual contributions to the County tax coffers, Galt Mile residents receive almost nothing in return. Half the County budget funds the Broward Sheriff's Office. While we are very grateful for Sheriff Al Lambert's vocal opposition to the threat posed by Calypso, virtually no BSO resources protect the Galt Mile neighborhood. Since we pay the City of Fort Lauderdale for providing our Police and Fire Protection, our county tax contributions actually subsidize neighboring jurisdictions that use BSO services. We enjoy no local county parks or recreational resources and even fund our own beach maintenance and security. Other than four or five annual Property Appraiser outreach opportunities at the Beach Community Center, the County spends almost nothing for our slice of the Barrier Island.

Of course, we are awaiting the long-delayed Broward Beach Renourishment. This significant neighborhood improvement will directly benefit every Galt Mile resident. Notwithstanding, since the beach is one of the County's primary financial engines, it will also benefit every Broward resident. There is one County enterprise, however, that was organized uniquely to enrich life in our community - the tiny Galt Mile Reading Center.

While the beach is the heart of our neighborhood, this mini-library is certainly its soul. Arguably the most popular local resource on Galt Ocean Drive, it has provided throngs of mostly elderly residents with a convenient location to research almost anything, meet with friends or simply log in some quiet time. Most of the locals are on a first name basis with every staffer, including temporaries and substitutes. Five regular staffers help the 2,390 residents that visit the Center each week locate "New York Times" best-sellers, DVDs of foreign films, health-related audio books or search Google for exotic recipes. Often unable to finish enjoying their selected resource by closing time, library clientele check out 1,695 items each week.

Whether enrolled in a Senior Self Defense class or Introduction to Computers, Galt Milers that perceive the mini-library as their community center keep the sidewalk planter in front of the Reading Room filled with fresh flora. Visiting authors review their works, local poets recite their creations and culture groups celebrate their unique ethnicities. Despite its modest designation as a "Reading Room", since the library is networked into the massive Broward library system, it is a doorway to the planet.

The thousands of previously technophobic local residents who were first introduced to the internet in Reading Room classes keep the six free online computers busy through lockup. Facilitated by the "Galt Ocean Mile Friends of the Library," a local 12-member chapter of the umbrella "Friends of Broward County Libraries," integration of the Reading Center into community life was swift and spontaneous. Many of the individual condos and

co-ops along the Galt Mile post library events and information on their bulletin boards and newsletters, functionally treating the resource as an association amenity. Almost every Galt Mile family holds one of the 5,338 library cards originally registered by the Galt Ocean Mile branch. Given the influx of younger families into the neighborhood over the past decade as well as visiting grandchildren, the 126 cards registered to kids unlock a well-rounded children's section.

The Reading Center provides a unique example of government serendipitously "getting it right". The facility's sterling utilization statistics clearly confirm its status as an unqualified success. Ironically, its overwhelming popularity blossomed despite a series of County gaffes that might have ordinarily undermined any other institution. By 2005, the explosive demand on the Reading Center prompted the County to authorize an expansion. In the years that followed, the popular improvement project was repeatedly victimized by ineptitude and administrative blunders. When Broward County leasing specialists rented space adjacent to the Reading Room to accommodate the expansion, they forgot to check the premises. The floor and one of the two ceilings were loaded with asbestos! If disturbed, the toxic cocktail would precipitate a virtual mesothelioma epidemic among Reading Center fans.

From 2006 through last year, Broward Library Director Bob Cannon intermittently promised a patchwork of remedies to the quandary when pressed by the Galt Mile Friends group. Other than occasionally closing the doors for assorted toxicity tests and engineering options, little was accomplished. An angry Commissioner Ken Keechl agreed to help expedite a reasonable resolution to the dilemma. When he announced last year that the Reading Room might fall prey to ambitious County budget cuts, he promised to help insure its survival. Although enraged and discouraged by three years of county double-talk, local Friends President Herman Gardner frantically sought to keep the parties communicating. On October 30, 2008, Cannon wrote to Gardner, outlining the division's most recent progress, apologizing for the indefensible delays and thanking him for his patience and support.

Following recent media disclosures that the tiny Reading Room was part of a multi-branch burnt offering to county bean counters, Gardner received hundreds of phone calls from angry residents offering to wage war on virtually anyone threatening to close their library. He contacted District 4 County Commissioner Ken Keechl and Galt Mile Community Association President Pio Ieraci, seeking to verify the reports. The Commissioner admitted that county staff had recommended closing library branches, targeting primarily those housed in locations leased by the county. To help assuage Gardner and a rapidly growing constituency that expected Keechl to keep the doors open, the Commissioner explained that the reports were describing preliminary events considered at Budget Workshops. He said that the final verdict wouldn't be cast until the September Budget Meetings.

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Reading Room
Computer Bank



Resident Peruses Volumes



Galt Ocean Mile
Reading Room

Neighborhood Prepares Defense

Gardner, a Galleon resident, decided that it was time to act. After enlisting the assistance of GMCA President Pio Ieraci to help organize neighborhood support for the Reading Room, he convened a May 2nd Saturday meeting at the Library. Having learned about the meeting by word of mouth, some fifty mostly elderly attendees squeezed into a little meeting room periodically used for Election Day polling purposes. Expressing sentiments ranging from indignant anger to glum futility, each described how the library anchored their lives.

Southpoint octogenarian Sally Sober (AKA Sara) announced that she communicated with Broward Mayor Stacy Ritter's office to inform her about the meeting. Convinced that Ritter would soon arrive, Sober previewed her defense of the Library. "The truth is it keeps me alive. It is a part of my life that can't be replaced. It is as important as food and water." When it became evident that Ritter wouldn't show, the feisty Sober admonished, "We have to let Ms. Ritter and Mr. Keechl know that if we lose our Library, they will lose their jobs." Following a round of applause, several residents that participated in defeating the Calypso Gasworks months earlier offered to help organize opposition using similar strategies. Tasks assigned to various volunteers included distributing petitions to every association, creating fact sheets summarizing the issues and more effectively alerting local residents to the impending threat.

Scores of residents attended a second organizational meeting two weeks later – too many for the modest meeting room. Dozens of worried elderly patrons testified about the Center's stabilizing impact on their lives. In addition to detailing their participation in various events, the renderings shared a common theme – the library patrons were able to come and go "under their own steam." A Royal Ambassador resident clarified, "Each year, my world gets smaller – but I can still get across the street on my own. I don't need to ask anyone for a lift and I don't have to cut into my food budget. The Library helps me feel self-sufficient and independent. I can still enjoy life's gifts without asking for permission or help." Looking around the room, he added, "We all feel that way." Instead of the usual nods and expressions of passive assent, the room burst into applause. His statement touched a nerve. As his increasing infirmities narrowed access to long-held interests and activities, his appreciation for the Library's offerings grew exponentially. The Center's convenient access empowers elderly and disabled patrons with a degree of control lost to them in other areas of their lives.

Friends President Herman Gardner was invited to attend the May 21st GMCA Advisory Board meeting. After apprising association representatives about the Reading Center's prospective demise, the board voted unanimously to vest Gardner with the authority to represent the neighborhood with respect to saving the Library. Several Advisory Board members volunteered to take a direct part in any rescue strategy. Although Commissioner Keechl is the community's voice on the County Commission, Ieraci agreed to help elicit active participation by other local public officials.

Engineered by Plaza South resident Terry Claire, within a month, thousands of petition signatures were collected at 26 participating associations. A "resolution of support" template was created

and distributed to the member associations for approval by their respective Boards and a letter writing campaign was initiated. The third organizational meeting was held on May 30th.

At that meeting, Bob Evans from Galt Towers lamented that the county didn't understand the neighborhood's relationship with the Library. He explained, "There is more here than just books. Thousands of us come here to share cultural experiences and attend classes. This little storefront connects us to the world. Walking across the street opens the door to theater, poetry and literature. Losing this center would be a disaster for hundreds of my friends and neighbors." Almost one third of the average 2,390 patrons hosted by the center each week attend classes, poetry recitals, book and theatre reviews, and various cultural events co-tailored over years by residents and staff. "Sending us off to the Imperial Point branch to take out a book resolves nothing."

In the Same Boat

Since 7 small branch libraries are threatened with closure, members weighed the pros and cons of coordinating survival campaigns with some or all of them. Some closely mirror our reasons for requesting special dispensation from the County Commission. The Beach Branch in Pompano and the Century Plaza Branch in Deerfield Beach are frequented by large numbers of elderly residents who also view their facilities as lifelines

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"There is more here than just books. Thousands of us come here to share cultural experiences and attend classes. This little storefront connects us to the world. Walking across the street opens the door to theater, poetry and literature. Losing this center would be a disaster for hundreds of my friends and neighbors."

to the world. Like the Galt Mile Reading Center, they provide social opportunity, emotional sustenance and intellectual stimulation – “Quality of Life” necessities often lost to relocated retirees. While the Galt Mile Center and Beach branch in Pompano pull double duty as local polling places, the Century Plaza branch does not.

Neighborhoods surrounding some of the 6 other leased libraries are equally adamant about saving their branches. A recent newspaper article reported that Deerfield Beach Commissioner Marty Popelsky, seeking to align support for the endangered Century Plaza branch, said at a City Commission meeting, “Please contact the County Commission; fax your county commissioners. There are 12,000 people per week using it versus 3,000 people at Percy White (Library).” In fact, they are both only frequented by roughly the same number of weekly patrons as the Galt Mile branch – about 2500. However, Popelsky’s misstated exuberance was matched by County Commissioner Kristin Jacobs, who vowed to “fight to the death” to keep the Century Plaza library afloat.

One group, Friends of the Broward County Library, has taken up the gauntlet for every threatened branch. On May 11th, they sponsored a writing campaign to County Commissioners using pre-printed post cards distributed to all 37 Broward branch libraries. When questioned about the campaign’s efficacy, Broward Friends President Evelyn Grooms reinforced the importance of pressuring the County Commissioners.

After considering potential alignments, the Galt Mile residents focused on rationales unique to their neighborhood. While these neighboring facilities share similarly impressive utilization statistics, their clientele represents about a third to a half of the surrounding neighborhood. The Galt Mile Branch is regularly used by about 80 percent of the surrounding community. The residents finally agreed to adopt a hybrid approach. Although community activists would limit their struggle to rescuing the Galt Mile Reading Center, they would encourage Commissioner Keechl to work with Commissioners representing other districts with branches leased by the County. In addition to Kristin Jacobs, Keechl might approach Sue Gunzburger, whose Hollywood Beach Library is at risk, and Josephus Eggelation, the Commissioner representing the endangered Lauderhill Mall branch.

Another understanding arose from the May 30th strategy meeting. The residents agreed that they needed to demonstrate the insufferable imbalance between the County’s prospective savings versus damage done to the community. If the Galt Mile branch is closed, county staffers expect its nearly 6000 cardholding registrants and thousands of cardless patrons (family members and visitors) to find their way to the Imperial Point Library on Federal Highway. Instead of pushing a walker across the street, disabled residents without access to a vehicle will have to plan their daily visits around public transportation and pay their way to and from a facility that is miles away on the mainland. To the library’s disproportionately large complement of fixed income patrons plagued with mobility issues, the Imperial Point branch may as well be on the moon.

A County Dog And Pony Show

How will the County benefit from closing the library? The facility’s stated operating budget is \$378,381 (\$233,213 in salaries and \$145,168 in operational costs). Of the \$145,168 in operational costs, \$114,000 was earmarked for rent and \$31,168 paid utilities, custodial expenses, equipment, books, supplies, etc. However, since the rent included \$44,000 for the unused adjacent toxic space wherein the lease recently expired, the net rent is actually \$70,000. That reduces the annual operational expenses to \$334,381.

Galt Mile Librarian Marlene Barnes explained that the terms of their union contract (Local 1591 of the Amalgamated Transit Union) will dictate the fate of the unit’s 5 staffers (and their \$233,213 in salaries). Barnes said, “Director Cannon told us that some of the 750 library employees may or may not be at risk. Since the contract requires the county to rotate employees to other county positions based on seniority, we should all be transferred to other county jobs if the Center closes.” Since the Reading Center staff will continue to draw their salaries, albeit from other Broward branches or agencies, the net savings drops to \$101,168. Since the county’s net cost to service the Center’s 124,280 annual resident visits (including 88,140 items checked out each year) amounts to less than 82¢ (82 cents) per visitor, no other county service remotely approaches the inherent cost benefit. If the other 6 ill-fated branches yield the paltry savings produced by closing the Galt Mile branch, it would expose the staff recommendation to close the facility as a dog and pony show. Not surprisingly, several residents noted that “By canning one big shot, we can pay for the library for the next two or three years.” The question is... which big shot?

Continued on page 13

**SAVE THE
READING
ROOM**

FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER BRUCE G. ROBERTS

I would like to extend my thanks to all of the 4,953 voters from District 1 who participated in the March 10, 2009 municipal election. It is obvious, citywide, that people do want a change and now is the best time for that to happen. With three new Commissioners and a new Mayor we will move forward with a renewed energy for positive change. I stated in my campaign that I would bring back your voice to City government, and I mean just that. I have an open door policy, and if you contact me I promise to respond quickly. I may not have immediate answers, but you will receive a reply right away. I will engage residents and businesses in District 1 and throughout the City to help find creative solutions to the issues we face.

As your new Commissioner, I am employed by you and will listen to you and work for you; revitalizing community involvement in political decisions by keeping everyone informed. Early in my thirty-five years of service to the community, I realized that the most successful government achievements came when citizen participation was incorporated into those efforts. Public safety is and always has been one of the few very basic services citizens demand from their government; indeed, it is the primary historic reason people have banded together to form governments. A stable community fosters economic development, which, in turn, opens the door for a safe community. A safe community nurtures a better quality of life for its citizens who can then take full advantage of all this community has to offer. By bringing back community policing, our citizens will be directly participating in a partnership to solve their neighborhoods' problems. By bringing back training, our public safety professionals will be better equipped with

the skills and tools needed to better address the chronic problems associated with homelessness and crisis intervention scenarios. By bringing back a focused technology with practical applications, resources will be deployed to improve response times, reduce crime, increase visibility and control budgets. At our first commission meeting, we directed the City Manager to freeze current fiscal year expenditures, except for public safety, with the goal to carry forward savings into next year's budget.

District 1 residents will now have the opportunity to meet with me at Pre-Agenda Meetings on the Monday before a Commission Meeting which are usually the first and third Tuesdays of the month. The meetings will be at 6:00 p.m. at Cardinal Gibbons High School, Media Room (2900 NE 47th Street) and are for the purpose of reviewing and discussing the upcoming City Commission Agenda. I encourage you to take part in these informal and open meetings.

Please contact me to become involved in your community; we need your input, ideas and your commitment to make Fort Lauderdale the best it can be.

If further information is needed, please feel free to contact my assistant Robbi Uptegrove at 954-828-5033. •



City Commissioner Bruce Roberts Welcomes Constituent Input

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What Can I Do?

The final decision about whether the libraries become extinct will be made by the Broward County Commission at the September Budget Meetings. Prior to making decisions about budget issues, the County convenes a series of Budget Workshops. They are held at the Broward County Government Center (Room 422) at 115 South Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, 33301. The remaining meetings are scheduled from 1 PM to 5 PM on Tuesday, June 16th and Tuesday, August 18th. We understand that the Library cutbacks will be considered at the June 16th Budget Workshop. The two Budget Meetings are scheduled for September 10th and September 22nd at 5:01 PM. We understand that the final verdict regarding the Libraries will be considered at the September 22nd Budget Meeting.

Therefore, residents wishing to express their opposition to closing the Galt Mile Reading Center will have an opportunity to do so at the June 16th Budget Workshop and the September 22nd Budget Meeting. For additional information, please call County Administration at (954) 357-7350. You can also contact District 4 County Commissioner Ken Keechl at (954) 357-7004. To personally address the Commission at any of these events, call County Administration to learn about any required preliminary protocols. In the interim, Please contact the County Commissioners to ask that they rescue the Galt Ocean Mile Reading Center. Their contact information is on the Galt Mile web site (www.galtmile.com). On the home page click on the headline "Neighborhood Fights to Save Galt Library", scroll to bottom of article where you'll find contact data and email links (including a link that will allow you to send one email to all 9 commissioners!). Otherwise, you can write them at the Government Center (address above). Their respective room numbers, telephone numbers and email addresses are:

(Insert Commissioner's Name)
Broward County Government Center
(Insert Room Number)
115 S Andrews Ave.
Ft Lauderdale, FL 33301

1. District 1 Commissioner Ilene Lieberman: Room # 417, (954) 357-7001, email: ilieberman@broward.org
2. District 2 Commissioner Kristin Jacobs: Room # 421, (954) 357-7002, email: kjacobs@broward.org
3. District 3 Commissioner and Mayor Stacy Ritter: Room # 413, (954) 357-7003, email: sritter@broward.org
4. District 4 Commissioner and Vice Mayor Ken Keechl: Room # 412, (954) 357-7004, email: kkeechl@broward.org
5. District 5 Commissioner Lois Wexler: Room # 414, (954) 357-7005, email: lwexler@broward.org
6. District 6 Commissioner Sue Gunzburger: Room # 421, (954) 357-7006, email: sgunzburger@broward.org
7. District 7 Commissioner John E. Rodstrom Jr.: Room # 416, (954) 357-7007, email: jrodstrom@broward.org
8. District 8 Commissioner Diana Wasserman-Rubin: Room # 410, (954) 357-7008, email: dwassermanrubin@broward.org
9. District 9 Commissioner Josephus Eggelletion, Jr.: Room # 413, (954) 357-7009, email: jeggelletion@broward.org

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<p>14 Afternoon Tea Fairchild Tropical Garden 3 to 5 p.m. Res.: 305-663-8091</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 AAU Taekwondo Nat'l Championships (Through 6/21) Broward Convention Center Info.: 954-765-5900</p> <p>Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You Museum of Discovery & Science 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Info.: 954-713-0930</p>	<p>17 Bad Company Hard Rock Live Tix.: 1-800-745-3000</p> <p>Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You Museum of Discovery & Science 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Info.: 954-713-0930</p>
<p>21 Florida Marlins vs. NY Yankees Dolphin Stadium 5:05 p.m. Tix.: 305-626-7400</p> <p>First Day of Summer</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>22 Tillamook Cheddar Mid-Career Ret- rospective 1999-2009 (Through 8/19) Art & Culture Center of Hollywood Info.: 954-921-3274</p>	<p>23 Stomp (Through 6/28) Broward Center Tix.: 954-462-0222</p> <p>Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You Museum of Discovery & Science 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Info.: 954-713-0930</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You Museum of Discovery & Science 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Info.: 954-713-0930</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>29 Beyonce BankAtlantic Center Tix.: 954-835-7469</p> <p>Frank Lloyd Wright in Ft Lauderdale (Through 2/10) 219 SW 2nd Avenue Info.: 954-463-4431</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You Museum of Discovery & Science 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Info.: 954-713-0930</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>5 Urban Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p> <p> Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5985</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Commissioner Bruce Roberts: Pre-Agenda Meeting Cardinal Gibbons High School, Media Room 6 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5033</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>12</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market 1201 E. Las Olas Blvd. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Aerosmith with ZZ Top BankAtlantic Center Tix.: 954-835-7469</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>

JUNE/JULY



ONE SOURCE FOR COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

THU

FRI

SAT

18

G.M.C.A. Advisory Board Meeting
Nick's Italian Restaurant
11 a.m.

19

Jazz on the Square
The Village Grille
Commercial Blvd. & ATA
7 p.m.
Info.: 954-776-5092

Florida Marlins vs. NY Yankees
Dolphin Stadium
7:10 p.m.
Tix.: 305-626-7400

20

Stonewall Street Festival
(Through 6/21)
Wilton Manors
Info.: 954-564-8707
Summertime No-Kill Adoption Fair
War Memorial Auditorium

Starlight Musicals
Rodeo Clowns (Country)
Holiday Park, 7 to 10 p.m.
Info.: 954-828-5363

25

Ft. Lauderdale Int'l
Swimming Invitational
(Through 6/28)
Ft. Lauderdale Aquatic Complex

Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You
Museum of Discovery & Science
9 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Info.: 954-713-0930

26

Jazz on the Square
The Village Grille
Commercial Blvd. & ATA
7 p.m.
Info.: 954-776-5092

27

Transforming Science
(Through 6/28)
Museum of Discovery & Science
2:30 p.m.

Starlight Musicals
Valerie Tyson Band (Rhythm & Blues)
Holiday Park
7 to 10 p.m.
Info.: 954-828-5363

2

3

Jazz on the Square
The Village Grille
Commercial Blvd. & ATA
7 p.m.
Info.: 954-776-5092

4

Fourth of July Celebrations!!!

Dania Beach (954) 924-3672, Deerfield
Beach (954) 480-4428, Fort Lauderdale
Beach (954) 828-5363, Hollywood (954)
921-3404, Plantation (954) 452-2522,
Lauderdale-by-the-Sea (954) 776-0576,
Coral Springs (954) 344-1000,
Pompano Beach (954) 786-4600

9

Seussical Jr.
(Through 7/11)
Broward Center of the Performing Arts
Tix.: 954-462-0222

The Muscular Body as Living Art
Museum of Art Ft Lauderdale
Info.: 954-262-0249

John Legend
Hard Rock Live
Tix.: 800-745-3000

10

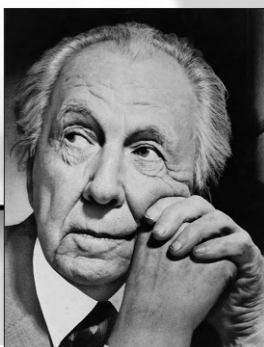
Jazz on the Square
The Village Grille
Commercial Blvd. & ATA
7 p.m.

11

17th Annual International
Mango Festival
(Through 7/12)
Fairchild Tropical Garden
9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Info.: 305-663-8091

Moonlight, Sea Turtles, & You
Museum of Discovery & Science
9 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Info.: 954-713-0930

16



17

Jazz on the Square
The Village Grille
Commercial Blvd. & ATA
7 p.m.

Publix Family Fitness Weekend
(Through 7/19)
Birch State Park
6 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Info.: 561-241-3801

18

Thomas and Friends Live!
(Through 7/19)
Broward Center
Tix.: 954-462-0222

UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUR AREA

July 25 - 26
Butterfly Days
Fairchild Tropical Garden
9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Info.: 305-663-8091

July 25 - 26
Buckler's Christmas in July Craft Fair
War Memorial Auditorium
Info.: 386-860-0092

July 29
American Idols Live 2009 Tour
BankAtlantic Center
Tix.: 954-835-7469

July 31
OPENING: Harry Potter and the Half Blood
Prince: The IMAX Experience
Museum of Discovery and Science

August 1 - 2
Fort Lauderdale Antique & Collector Fair
War memorial Auditorium

August 14 - 15
US Hot Rod Monster Jam Summer Heat
BankAtlantic Center
Tix.: 954-835-7469



CHEPO LAYS SOME GROUNDWORK

By Eric Berkowitz



Chepo Reviews
Tree Bindings

In early November, Commodore resident José “Chepo” Vega emailed a complaint to the Galt Mile Community Association about the “precarious” state of landscaping along Galt Ocean Drive. A few days later, he followed it up with a call to GMCA Vice President Eric Berkowitz, exclaiming “While I was walking in front of my building, I saw someone walk into a low hanging tree limb. It could have blinded him. Why doesn’t the City pay attention to the landscaping on our block?” Chepo argued that if he knew who to contact about addressing this issue, he would gladly volunteer his time and horticultural acumen. He was invited to apprise Advisory Board members and former Commissioner Christine Teel about his concerns at the next Presidents Council meeting.

At the December 1st meeting, while participants discussed the Calypso Project, Beach Renourishment, monkey business in the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation, the impact of deliberately dilatory foreclosures on Association budgets, recent successes realized by the Galt Mile Security Patrol and other agenda items, Chepo cornered Commissioner Teel, detailing his concerns. Offering to contact the Parks Department and investigate the problem, she requested that he contact her office the following day.

The next evening, Chepo emailed GMCA officials Pio Ieraci and Eric Berkowitz, reporting his previous evening’s discussion with Commissioner Teel and another earlier that day. Excited about the prospect of finally making headway, he wrote “I spoke briefly to Commissioner Teel at the Monday meeting then called her subsequently at her suggestion. In our conversation I mentioned our concerns about the problems we are having with the sidewalk trees. I told her that the trees are growing bent due to the strong ocean winds and the use of the wrong stakes to prop the trees. I mentioned to her that somebody can injure their eyes with the low branches, etc. I volunteered to meet with anybody from the city that can help solve this problem. Teel told me that she is going to call the persons in charge of the planting and if I did not hear from them in a week, to call her and let her know.”

As directed by Commissioner Teel, commission assistant Eve Bazar sent an email to Julie Richards, assistant to City Manager George Gretsas, explaining, “José Vega resides at the Commodore condo on the Galt. He

feels that the trees on the Galt aren’t being pruned properly, and in some cases may cause harm to people since the branches are too low. Mr. Vega talked with the commissioner and would like to meet with someone from P&R (sic - Parks and Recreation) who is responsible for the trees so he can alert them to the problems. Would you please have someone from P&R contact Mr. Vega to discuss this matter. Thanks.”

A week later, Parks Department Operations Superintendent Brian Hopper met with Chepo. On December 13th, shortly after their meeting, Hopper notified Assistant Director Terry Rynard of Parks and Recreation, “I have met with Mr. Vega and we have begun trimming and restaking the trees. We will continue this work over the next week or two. Mr. Vega is pleased with our response thus far and was very complimentary of staff. I will follow up when work is 100 prct complete.”

To recruit additional support from the 27 member associations, Chepo attended the December 18th GMCA Advisory Board meeting at Nick’s Italian Restaurant. Following reports by Broward Commissioner Ken Keechl and City Commissioner Teel, members worked through the packed meeting agenda. Under “Other Business,” President Pio Ieraci reported, “A walk-through of the Galt Mile with city representatives was conducted to review the condition of trash cans, benches and the general aesthetics of our beachscape.”

Explaining that a full report detailing their findings and potential resolutions would be forthcoming by February, Ieraci turned to Chepo, thanking him for following his original complaint with active pursuit of redress. After announcing, “Chepo is working with the City to address the landscaping problems along Galt Ocean Drive,” he proposed that Chepo be officially vested to represent the Neighborhood Association in this effort. A quick vote affirmed Chepo’s status. After indicating that she would notify the Parks Department about the Advisory Board’s action, Commissioner Teel said that Chepo would “probably hear from them after the Holidays.”

Over the next few weeks, Parks personnel completed trimming the trees and the Department ordered 10 new trash cans. Anxious to participate in the improvements, Chepo fired off an email to Eric Berkowitz on January 3rd, stating, “Eric, I have been waiting for somebody from the city to get in touch with me. I am calling the Parks supervisor on Monday now that the Holidays are over. I would like to share with you some new pictures of the Galt landscape that I feel must be tackled too. The sooner the better. Any chance that we can meet for few minutes tomorrow or Monday?”

Continued on page 17

Itching to get rolling, on January 7th Chepo emailed GMCA officials "I called Brian Hopper, Parks Operation Superintendent and he will be in touch with me in two weeks. They are very busy finishing the new South Side Park which is due soon and they are a little behind schedule. I will keep you guys posted." A week later, a relieved Chepo announced, "The City Tree People showed up by surprise. I spent time with them and have pictures. I have some information about the landscape. Let me know if you can use it for the newsletter." An optimistic Chepo ran up the block and hand delivered pictures detailing the improvements.

Chepo buckled down to work with Brian Hopper. In the first report he prepared for the neighborhood association, Chepo summarized the two week project. Following a walk-through with Hopper and landscaping personnel, crews assigned to the project trimmed more than three dozen trees, cutting branches deemed dangerous to marginally attentive pedestrians and passing bicycle enthusiasts. Sizing stakes were installed to better control future growth and broken metal grates framing the block's trees were repaired and/or properly re-installed.

The trees planted along Galt Ocean Drive have two strikes against them. When Urban Forester Gene Dempsey addressed a 2005 Presidents Council meeting, he explained that a newly hired city horticulturist would supervise the planting of all new "environmentally compatible" flora along the block. The plan went awry in 2007 when Parks personnel discovered that the Green Buttonwoods planted years earlier grew Olympian root systems, irreversibly entangling cables, utility lines, telephone lines and drainage elements. Were they simply torn out, residents in the adjacent buildings would taste life in the 17th century. Having failed to pry out the roots, cut them away or selectively poison certain offshoots, Parks Department Assistant Director Terry Rynard explained that the plans were in trouble. They would have to try rooting smaller trees in areas filled with irretrievable root balls.

During a June 2007 landscaping walk through with Rynard and Parks Foreman Tim Southby, GMCA President Pio Ieraci learned why hurricane-damaged trees were deliberately replaced with undersized trees suffering from multi-week life spans. "The silver buttonwoods that we have planted on the walkway were chosen for their size for many reasons," exclaimed Southby. "The openings in the sidewalk are only so big. Many of the old root systems are still in the ground from the old trees and from other trees along the sidewalk. Electrical and irrigation for these trees runs through these openings, causing us to use smaller and not as mature specimens as we would like to have used." Southby elaborated, "For this reason we have had to stake and strap the trees in ways we normally would not like to have to use. We know that it isn't the most attractive method but it is working."

In 2007, city officials had to find a way to plant new trees without first having to remove the stifling remnant root balls. Initially, unsupported trees were planted in whatever space was available amid the overcrowded root remnants. As often as not, they died. If they could have somehow sustained the trees following their initial implantation, the replacements' chances for survival would have increased substantially. Tim Southby explained steps taken by the Parks Department to accomplish this objective, "We are also currently topping off most of the buttonwoods to stop adding more stress to the lower trunk and the root system. This will allow the trunk to thicken up and give it the strength that we need to allow the strapping to come off and make the sidewalk area more appealing."

By initially keeping the trees small, their growth resources would be directed towards bulking up their trunks, enhancing their prospects for survival. Southby theorized that this strategy, in combination with concentrating scheduled fertilization, would shorten the period that the trees appeared undersized. Ieraci asked Southby how long the small silver buttonwoods would have to remain staked and strapped. "We hope by June of 2008 the strapping will come off most of the trees except for the ones that we have had to replace in the last few weeks," predicted Southby. Unfortunately, things didn't transpire as planned.

At the time, Assistant Parks Director Rynard agreed with Southby's assessment, exclaiming "You won't have to wait ten years to see substantial growth. We're making the best out of a bad situation. We plan to intensively fertilize the new trees. Once they are firmly rooted, we should see some rapid growth." Southby also blamed the old root balls for some of the damage sustained by the aggregate sidewalks originally installed as part of the Galt Mile Improvement Project. He explained "The root systems spread under the entire area. We found them wrapped around the tree cover grates and they dislodged sidewalks."

To successfully fulfill the City's contractual obligation to maintain the block "in a Disney like fashion," Parks personnel should have meticulously micromanaged the immature plantings through their initial growth period. They didn't. Of the staked trees that ultimately survived, many were severely gnarled – strangely reminiscent of the contorted tree gracing the Addams family household's front yard. Notwithstanding, any trees that lived did so in defiance of a terminally poor prognosis.

On the bright side, nature is reliably unpredictable. With timely trimming and extraordinary oversight, future years may serendipitously bring unforeseen improvement. Admittedly, the key factor is intensive nurturing. Perhaps Chepo is just what the doctor ordered - a committed landscaping advocate. If his efforts insure an ongoing Parks Department policy of properly managing the immature trees, the block may yet achieve the vision shared by a community driven to keep a "Smile on the Mile."



Jose Vega reviews landscaping plan with Parks Department Operations Superintendent Brian Hopper



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Chepo...Continued

Chepo recognized the larger benefit inherent in this cooperative effort, topping off his report with, "This cooperation is a positive sign for completion of future projects, like replacing our deteriorating benches, palm tree pruning and the filling of bald spots of ground cover between the sidewalk and the street." Expressing gratitude to former Commissioner Teel while extending an olive branch to Parks and Recreation Director Phil Thornburg's minions, Chepo added "With the support of our government officials and dedicated Parks employees, the Galt Mile Association and its residents can look forward to a productive partnership to keep the Galt Ocean Drive safe and beautiful."

While Chepo's work will produce a palpable benefit for every Galt Mile resident, of far greater significance is Chepo himself. Galt Mile Community Association officials have long acknowledged that the neighborhood's greatest asset is the diversity of its residents. The neighborhood association simply provides a vehicle for these residents to define and achieve shared objectives - a forum to focus on improving their lives. It is fueled by self-motivated people willing to work for these improvements. Without José "Chepo" Vega, and the dozens of other volunteers working together on beach renourishment, neighborhood security, block maintenance, insurance dilemmas, community association operations, beneficial legislation, fiscal efficiencies and a dozen other challenges, the Galt Mile would experience the deterioration suffered by any voiceless community.

As long as our neighborhood's squeaky wheels meet twice monthly to proactively insure its good health, Galt Mile residents will continue shaping their own destiny. No need to take my word for it - just ask Chepo!•

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