

What makes the City of Coral Gables special and what would you do if you were in charge?  
500 words, typed  
Due October 18  
Email to [slopez@coralgables.com](mailto:slopez@coralgables.com)

I hear the honking outside, it's a December morning and I run downstairs to see Santa on a firetruck throwing candy canes. No, I am not a child. I am seventeen and fully aware that Santa is not real, but I nearly trip over my own feet trying to make it out to the street in time. It was well worth it because five minutes later I was walking inside with a candy cane between my smiling lips.

It's the little things that make Coral Gables special. We have a big toy festival where you can see fire trucks and police cars up close and personal. A park that is transformed into a winter wonderland each December. And so many pieces of art and historic places. As a high-school senior, I will be leaving next fall for another city. It saddens me to know that on my drive home, I won't be cloaked by the Banyon trees or pass the Venetian Pool. I can't spend my Friday nights driving eighteen circles around the De Soto Fountain. And I won't be running along the Granada Golf Course as the sun sets in its radiant pinks, oranges, and reds. I won't be at home anymore.

Coral Gables is a small town within a big city. Miami is large and diverse, but Coral Gables is small and unified. If I were in charge I would try to make it feel even smaller and more connected. We have all seen small towns on TV, either Bluebell from Heart of Dixie or Stars Hollow from Gilmore Girls. There is no reason Coral Gables can't be that way. It could be a place with Ice Cream socials and knitting festivals. It might seem naive, I know, but when neighbor meets neighbor, you gain a greater respect for that person. I would like to live in a world with a little more respect, a little more love. Each person has a story, and I want to know as many stories as I can.

This is the City Beautiful, and we must work to ensure that the people in this city know that. Love is beautiful, and you must love your neighbor as you love yourself. If we could all meet someone new that is one new friend, and one friend can make all the difference. In a small town, people care. And here, in Coral Gables, we could work to create an environment of love and respect. We can be a model for other cities. We can be a model of unity. We can be a model of love. We are the City Beautiful.

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