



City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
April 16, 2024

ITEM TITLE:

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA, DECLARING PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS, AND URGING ACTION BY NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES CONSISTENT WITH THESE PRINCIPLES.

DEPARTMENT HEAD RECOMMENDATION:

Approval.

BRIEF HISTORY:

April is National Autism Acceptance Month. Acceptance month emphasizes the need for public awareness to promote acceptance, celebrate differences, and be more inclusive towards individuals with autism. Approximately 1 in 36 children have an autism spectrum disorder according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The United States of America is a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which supports the inclusion and accommodation of children and adults with special needs and disabilities. The Convention has identified the following core principles of inclusion:

- a. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- b. Non-discrimination;
- c. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- d. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- e. Equality of opportunity;
- f. Accessibility;
- g. Equality between men and women;
- h. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

The City demonstrates its commitment to inclusion through its Advisory Board on Disability Affairs, which advises and provides input to City staff regarding matters affecting individuals with disabilities in Coral Gables in an effort to support full inclusion and accommodation. With participation from the Disability Affairs Board and the School & Community Relations Committee, the City obtained a self-contained classroom for students with disabilities in a public middle school located within City boundaries and at Fairchild Elementary.

The City is committed to integrated employment and has partnered with Best Buddies and the de Moya Foundation to hire individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help people with IDD

reach their full potential and become as independent as possible and the City is also working with the Chamber so that City businesses can deliver meaningful employment, fair wages, and career advancement for individuals with disabilities.

The City hosted Project Victory students during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years and will be hosting them again during the 2024-2025 school year. Project Victory is a program developed by Miami-Dade County Public Schools to prepare students with disabilities for financial, personal/social, and/or independent functioning through the acquisition of employability skills essential for success in the workplace. Project Victory students work at City Hall, the 427 Building, and the Public Safety Building and benefit from on-the-job training and real-life experiences.

The City is committed to the principles of inclusion as demonstrated through the Coral Gables Police Department's collaboration with the Disability Independence Group and UM-NSU CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities) in the development of the Wallet Card Project of the Disability Independence Group, and related training videos, which is a nationally regarded program that assists individuals in informing governmental and police officials of their special needs through the Wallet Card, and trains police officers in interactions with individuals on the autism spectrum and with other special needs.

The City's Police Department, to further autism education and promote inclusion, acceptance, and understanding, has wrapped a City Police Vehicle with the autism logo and this year for the first time has police badges with the autism logo that police officers will wear during the month of April.

The City in April of 2021 launched its GUIDE Program. The GUIDE Program is a voluntary program offered to residents with individuals and/or "special circumstances," who live within the City. Residents or parents/legal guardians of a resident can provide information about themselves or about the resident that they are registering that can be crucial to GUIDE the City's first responders to more effectively interact with that individual. Understanding the enrolled individual's disability or complex medical need prior to responding to a scene, allows first responders to continue acting with care and diligence while providing more efficient services, primarily in cases involving safely locating an enrolled individual.

The City's commitment to the principles of inclusion can also be seen in the City's Community Recreation Department, where all programs are inclusive. In addition, the Community Recreation Department hosts other activities such as My Squad, which is a monthly social gathering hosted by the City for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. This year it also hosted for the first time a Sensory Friendly 4th of July and a Gentle Practice Trick or Treat and will be hosting a Gentle Egg Hunt.

The City's commitment is also demonstrated in the passage of a resolution declaring principles of inclusion for individuals with Autism and other special needs each April beginning in 2016 as well as the passage of a resolution declaring principles of inclusion for all individuals with disabilities each October beginning in 2016.

City Hall will be lit up in blue on April 2, 2024, for World Autism Acceptance Day in support of understanding and acceptance for individuals with autism, and on April 1st, an autism flag designed by students with autism will be raised at City Hall.

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ATTACHMENT(S):

- 1. Resolution**