



City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
April 12, 2022

ITEM TITLE:

RESOLUTION. 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 Awareness Month, which provides an opportunity to reflect on the inherent dignity of all human beings, and the importance of including and accommodating and accepting children and adults on the autism spectrum, as well as children and adults with other special needs and disabilities in all aspects of daily life. Approximately 1 in 44 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 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; and
- 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 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 and the Coral Gables Police Department's commitment is also demonstrated through its work developing an Autism-Related Standard Operating Procedure for Coral Gables police officers, which is intended to set standards nationwide. The City's Police Department, to further autism education and promote inclusion, acceptance and understanding, also has wrapped a City Police Vehicle that is assigned to one of its police officers, whose brother has autism, with the autism logo.

The City is committed to integrated employment and has partnered with Best Buddies to hire individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help people with IDD reach their full potential and become as independent as possible. 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 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 also can be seen in the City's Community Recreation Department, where all programs are inclusive, and the Department among many other programs/activities started a Community Bocce Program for all ages and abilities, has inclusive music and dance programs, had sensory friendly days at the Holiday Park, and opened its first all-inclusive playground in October of 2021 (Salvadore Park).

The City's Community Recreation Department also recently launched My Squad. My Squad is a monthly social gathering hosted by the City for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. The activities change every month. Past activities have included game night, karaoke night, fishing, and decorating cookies during the holidays.

The City further 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. The City also demonstrates its commitment to inclusion through the Special Needs Initiative being spearheaded by its School & Community Relations Committee, in conjunction with Miami-Dade Public Schools and UM-NSU CARD, which is actively seeking to promote inclusion of individuals with special needs, and provide additional educational, residential, occupational, and recreational opportunities in doing so. With participation from the Disability Affairs Board and the School & Community Relations Committee, the City is working with Miami-Dade County Public Schools so that Miami-Dade County Public Schools offers self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities in public elementary and middle schools located within City boundaries.

Lastly, City Hall will be lit up in blue on April 2, 2022, for World Autism Awareness Day in support of understanding and acceptance for individuals with autism.

ATTACHMENT(S):

- 1. Draft Resolution**