

CITY OF CORAL GABLES ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS  
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER – CONFERENCE ROOM  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2014, 8:00 A.M.

- MEETING MINUTES -

MEMBERS	M 13	A 13	M 13	J 13	J 13	A 13	S 13	O 13	N 13	D 13	J 14	F 14	M 14	APPOINTED BY:
Sally Baumgartner	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	E	*	P	P	James C. Cason
Patricia Sowers	-	*	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	*	P	P	Patricia Keon
William Beckham	P	*	-	-	-	E	E	P	P	P	*	P	P	Vince Lago
Bonnie Blaire	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	P	P	William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Richard Whittington	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	P	P	Frank C. Quesada

P – Present  
E – Excused Absence  
A – Absent  
(-) – No Appointment  
(\*) – No Meeting

**STAFF:**

Lorena Garrido, Central Division Supervisor

**GUESTS:** None.

**CITIZEN ADVISORS:** None.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Ms. Blaire called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

**MEETING ABSENCE:** None.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

- February 5, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Dr. Whittington moved to approve the February 5, 2014 meeting minutes. Mrs. Sowers second the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** None.

**BOARD-RELATED COMMISSION ITEMS:** None.

**CITY UPDATE:** None.

**BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS:**

Mrs. Blaire mentioned February's Board meeting discussion relating to the Board's focus items in order to categorize the provided information. She asked for members to provide their reports:

1. Dr. Whittington reported he contacted the Fire Department's Laura Rodriguez and learned she has retired. However, he would like to invite Officer Kelly Denham to report on how the City is now addressing emergency situations relating to condos evacuations for the elderly and disabled. Mrs. Blaire suggested for this program to be scheduled for April's meeting and for Dr. Whittington to coordinate.
2. Mrs. Sowers' report was based on her interest of employment for the disabled. She contacted Ms. Lampon, Performance Improvement Consultant for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Ms. Lampon discussed the many ways the City of Coral Gables can help disabled adults secure and keep employment. Mrs. Sowers mentioned that (VR) tried contacting the City in the past to discuss the possibility of disabled teens volunteering without success. Mrs. Blaire suggested for Ms. Lampon to be invited to a future meeting to make a presentation and for the City's Human Resources Department, the Chamber of Commerce, Center for Independent Living and possibly others be invited to this presentation. Mrs. Sower and Mr. Beckham will team-up to make this presentation happen. Mrs. Sowers' report is attached for more information.
3. Mr. Beckham provided information regarding The Woody Foundation's "Woody Pack" items mentioned in February's meeting. He mentioned these items are distributed free to those in need and only require a survey in order to better develop the "Woody Pack". Ms. Blaire mentioned that the Merrick School which moved from the City of Coral Gables may be benefit from these items. Mrs. Blaire will provide the school's contact information for Mr. Beckham to follow-up. The Woody Pack Items list is attached for more information.
4. Mrs. Baumgartner discussed the cross walks on Miracle Mile. She stated they don't automatically change, unless the button is pushed. She also reported there's no braille or audible system. The question was how would a vision impaired person now to push the button? What needs to be done to get braille signs? Mrs. Blaire suggested contacting Virginia Jacko, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind.
5. Mrs. Blaire requested for Mr. Kinney, Parking Department Director, to come to the Board and provide a status of the Parking Enforcement Program and funds collected.

Mrs. Blaire share articles/information: (1) Miami Herald -10 years later, sailing strong; (2) The Florida Bar News - Court urges all bars to get right with the ADA; (3) Miami Herald – Teachers challenge testing for disabled students. Copies are attached to the minutes.

Advisory Board on Disability Affairs  
March 5, 2014 - Meeting  
Continued

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Wednesday, April 2, 2014, 8:00 am to be held at the *Coral Gables Youth Center's 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Conference Room.*

Brenda Lampon MS  
Performance Improvement Consultant  
Government Operations Consultant  
7975 Miami Lakes, FL 33016  
305-364-3000

Spoke with Ms. Lampon about the City of Coral Gables and its plan to be more aware of the needs of our disabled community and how best to serve this community. Ms. Lampon is the Performance Improvement Consultant for the Dept. of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). She spoke of many ways in which our city could collaborate with VR to help disabled adults secure and keep employment. Although there are over 90 public and private agencies in our area that service the disabled, most defer to VR when it comes to finding employment. Interestingly, acc. to Ms. Lampon, there are very few people who know about the existence of VR and know much less about the services offered by the agency. She made a number of suggestions:

1. for the appointment of a Coral Gables contact person who could disseminate information about the services offered by VR to anyone with a disability in need of employment (perhaps in one of our local newspapers and/or magazines as well as on our city website); this contact person could make direct client referrals to VR as well; she also suggested having this person engage in tracking the possible placement of the client and the corresponding follow-up
2. to have a representative appointed to represent the City of CG at the monthly meeting of the Association of Agencies (AOA) which is made up of over 60 organizations in Dade County that service the disabled in varying capacities; AOA is made up of gov agencies, private organizations, not-for-profit organizations, university reps, etc. who use this meeting to exchange information and primarily network
3. for the City to join with Project Search - Volunteers at City Hall in allowing disabled teens to volunteer at City Hall; at the present time, both the City of Miami and the City of Hialeah participate in the project; it is an international program that in addition to being set up in other states, it also has groups in Australia and Great Britain; the idea is to not only provide a positive work experience for the teen but also expand awareness of city employees regarding disabilities in general - an attempt to demystify erroneous notions about the disabled; removing stigma
4. to set up a date with the City's Chamber of Commerce to present information regarding the hiring of the disabled with the focus on the mutual benefits for both employer and employee; discuss tax credits both fed'l and state;

Ms. Lampon is very enthusiastic in collaborating with the City of Coral Gables and I believe will be an excellent source of information for the board.

The Association of Agencies (AOA) is a network of **non-profit and governmental agencies** as well as **educational institutions** in Miami-Dade County that work together to **address the needs of diverse populations** including persons with disabilities, veterans, seniors, and other vulnerable populations.

AOA associates maintain a **monthly forum, share ideas and resources** as well as **professional knowledge and experience** to better serve their consumers.

## **What is AOA?**

Established in 2000, the Association of Agencies (AOA) is a coalition of agencies and professional networking group that meets monthly to discuss and resolve disability issues in our local community.

### **Calendar**

There is a monthly meeting that is held every second Thursday of every month. The location is posted to the AOA calendar on this website. Click on link below to view more events.

### **Business & Industry**

One of our primary goals is to find or develop new opportunities for clients to find employment, educational training and experiences, community service inclusion and much more.

### **Associates**

Members of the Association of Agencies are either regular association participants who are looking to network, benefits from Association of Agencies. Learn how you can benefit from us by joining us.

## Adaptive Fund Kits

### 1. Armrest Bag



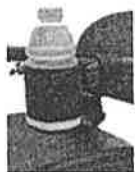
Single pocket bag made from high quality, water resistant nylon that mounts to any armrest. Keeps personal belongings close to you. Provides a handy storage area for keys, wallet, cell phone, glasses, etc.

### 2. Tervis Tumbler



16 ounce customized Woody Foundation Tervis Tumbler with handle.

### 3. Cup Holder



Fits drink containers ranging from 1" circumference all the way to a 32oz. Gatorade™ bottle. Chord with lock ensures drink will remain secure and upright. Can also be used as a bag.

### 4. Cell Phone Holder



Silicone Cell Phone Holder will allow you to hang your cell phone anywhere with its convenient stickman design. Wrap this flexible holder around any type of cell phone for hands-free interactivity.

### 5. Vertical Palm Fork & Soup Spoon



Plastic-coated self-handlers are bend 90° to enable a hand in mid position to function in table-to-mouth pattern.

### 6. ID Card Reel & Holder



Each reel is retractable and has a built-in clip for attachment to your clothing or chair. Great for holding ID cards and security badges where everyone can see them.

### 7. Utensil Holder



Heavy Duty pocket holds assorted utensils. Velcro® closure with handy D-ring makes it easier to slip holder on and off. Adjusts to hand.

### 8. Flash drive



Storage device for all your information needs, including selected information from The Woody Foundation.

## "Woody Pack Items"

### 9. Cylindrical Foam Padding



*Cut as needed from a continuous length to build up utensils and other self-help aids to enhance functionality.*

### 10. Paralysis Resource Guide



*Third edition Dana and Christopher Reeve Foundation book providing comprehensive information and connections in the Paralysis Community.*

# LOCAL & STATE

**Miami Herald**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2014 | EDITOR: JAY DUCASSI | [jducassi@miamiherald.com](mailto:jducassi@miamiherald.com) | 305-376-3557

H1

## DEATHS

### Huber Matos, rebel leader who broke with Castro

■ The former Cuban revolutionary leader has asked to have his remains returned to Cuba after the fall of the Castro government.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY AND LUISA VANEZ  
[achardy@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:achardy@MiamiHerald.com)

Huber Matos once said he knew the moment he had erred in joining forces with a young rebel named Fidel Castro.

In the late 1950s, the two were rebel leaders battling the government of dictator Fulgencio Batista, but Matos had an advantage: he was getting arms for his men from Costa Rica. Castro wanted them. He persuaded Matos to give him the arms for his own band of rebels in the Sierra Maestra.

"The day we met — March 20, 1958 — I had delivered to Castro the weapons we had smuggled from Costa Rica and he ordered me to go back and get more. I told him no, that I was staying in Cuba. He gave me a steely stare and said, 'You know, I'm in charge here.'"

## NORTHEAST MIAMI-DADE



CHARLES TRAINOR JR./MIAMI HERALD STAFF  
REASON TO CELEBRATE: Kathryn Guevara, with sailing mentor Jeanine McCleod, pilots a sailboat at Oleta River State Park on Thursday. Guevara came to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Anchors Away, a program that teaches children of all abilities how to sail.

# 10 years later, sailing strong

# LOCAL & STATE III B

Miami Herald

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2014 | EDITOR: JAY DUCASSI jducassi@miamiherald.com | 305-376-3557

H1

## 10 years later, sailing strong

BY CARL TEPROFF

cteproff@miamiherald.com

An experienced sailor, Kathryn Guevara knows her way around on the water. But getting into the small sailboat was a real challenge.

She had a little help on Thursday. Eight student mentors steered the boat at Miami-Dade's Oleta River State Park and three adults hoisted Guevara from her

wheelchair into a pink sailboat.

With an electronic joystick, Guevara, 24, beamed as she directed the boat into open waters — far away from the wheelchair that she uses.

Guevara, who has cerebral palsy, had an appreciative audience on shore.

"On the water, she is free," said Chris Martin, who heads the

adaptive physical education program at North Miami Beach Senior High School, where Guevara graduated in 2011. "It gives her a taste of independence."

For her mother, Marsha Monti, seeing her daughter out on the water was incredible.

"I never thought I'd be able to see her do this," Monti said, as she used her cellphone to snap pic-

tures of her daughter.

Guevara and thousands of children in Miami-Dade County Public Schools with physical and

•TURN TO SAILING, 28



MiamiHerald.com/video  
Watch a video of students

sailing

# Anchors Away marks 10 years of watery fun

• SAILING, FROM 1B

intellectual disabilities have been learning to sail over the last 10 years, thanks to the Anchors Away program.

On Thursday, dozens showed up to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the program, which began when Jayne Greenberg, the school district's director of physical education and health literacy, went on a sailing expedition with middle-school children.

Her idea was to buy a special boat that children, with all ability levels, could steer. She floated the idea by her good friend Elaine Adler, president of the Aventura Marketing Council.

The next thing she knew she was in front of philanthropist Billy Joel — who later became an Aventura commissioner — and he, as a boat lover, immediately committed to buying the first boat. He also promised to raise enough to buy six.

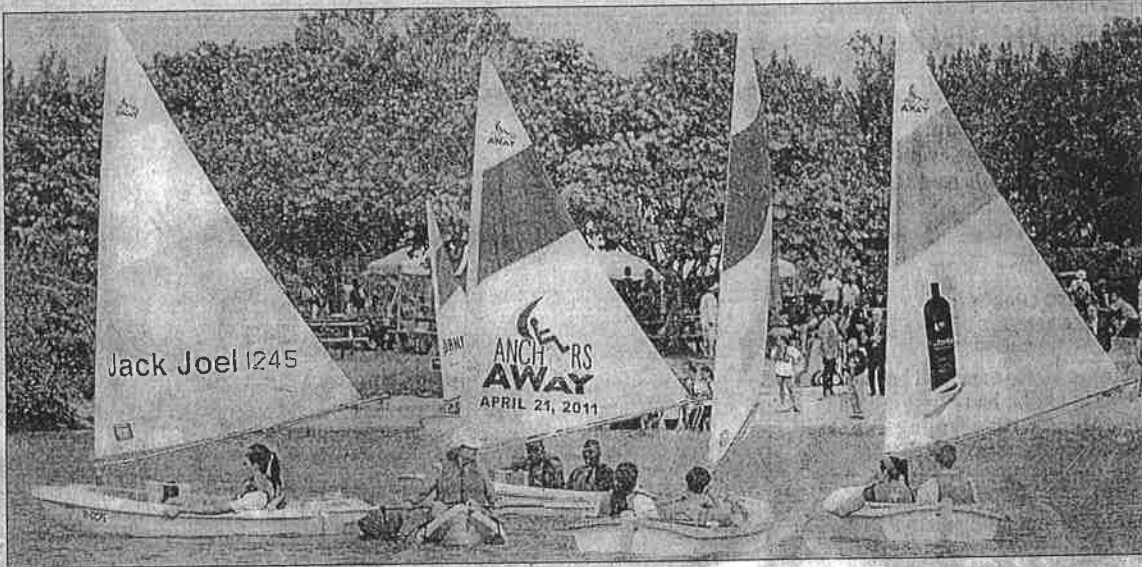
In the fall of 2004, the boats were ready. In 2005, the group gathered at Oleta River State Park to officially launch its first fleet of what Joel thought was six boats. But his friends chipped in and bought a seventh boat in honor of his late brother Jack Joel.

Greenberg said the program caught on quickly. Schools from across the county started bringing their special-needs students to use the boats.

"We never could have imagined it would have grown like this," she said.

Over the years, more fundraising continued and several more boats were purchased. What started as an informal committee became Anchors Away, a non-profit organization, in 2008, run through the marketing council.

The organization also supports maintenance of the vessels. Through a \$25,000 grant, Anchors Away also added beach-access wheelchairs to its in-



CHARLES TRAINOR JR./MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**REGATTA:** Students with the help of sailing mentors navigate the waters of Oleta River State Park on Thursday as part of the 10th anniversary celebration of Anchors Away.

ventory. When the program first started, each boat cost \$3,000. Now, they're about \$5,000 apiece.

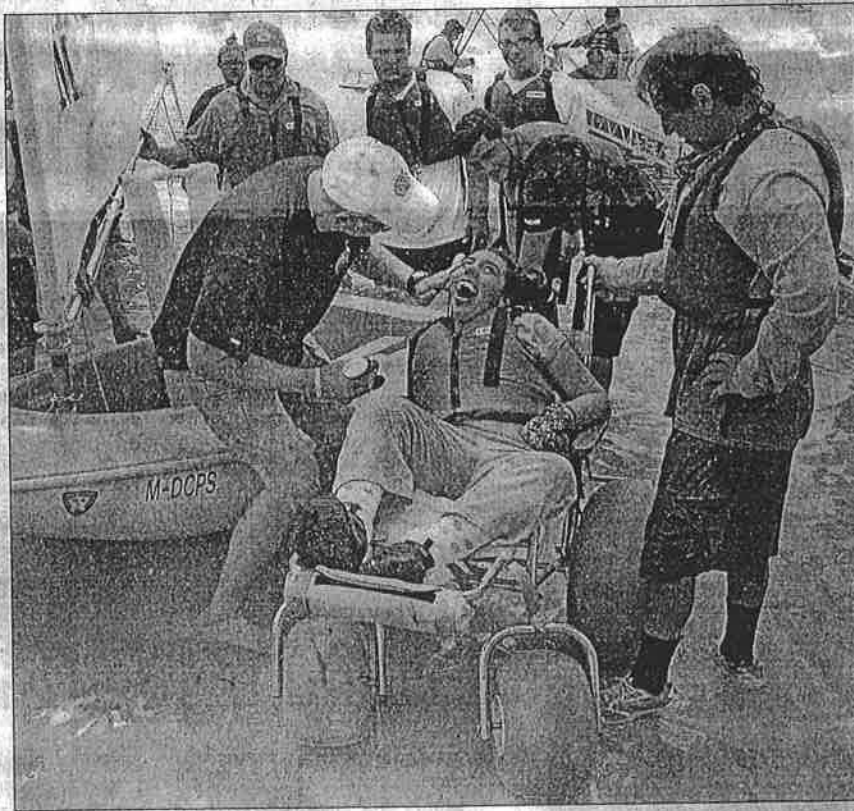
Eventually, Greenberg hopes the program will be picked up across the nation.

At Thursday's celebration, the 37 boats now in Anchors Away's fleet were lined up on shore. As their colorful sails flapped in the wind, student mentors from Hialeah Gardens middle and high schools helped some 80 special-needs students get in and out of the vessels.

Joel, on hand for the celebration, could barely hold back tears as he thanked everyone for opening their hearts and wallets.

"This is very emotional for me," he said. "When Kathryn first started she could barely hold a finger up. Now, she goes out on her own."

Said Martin, of North Miami Beach Senior High, "The one problem we have with the program is getting them off the water. And that's a lovely problem to have."



CHARLES TRAINOR JR./MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**READY TO SAIL:** Volunteers prepare to put an excited Kathryn Guevara in a sailboat on Thursday at Oleta River State Park.

est. 1974



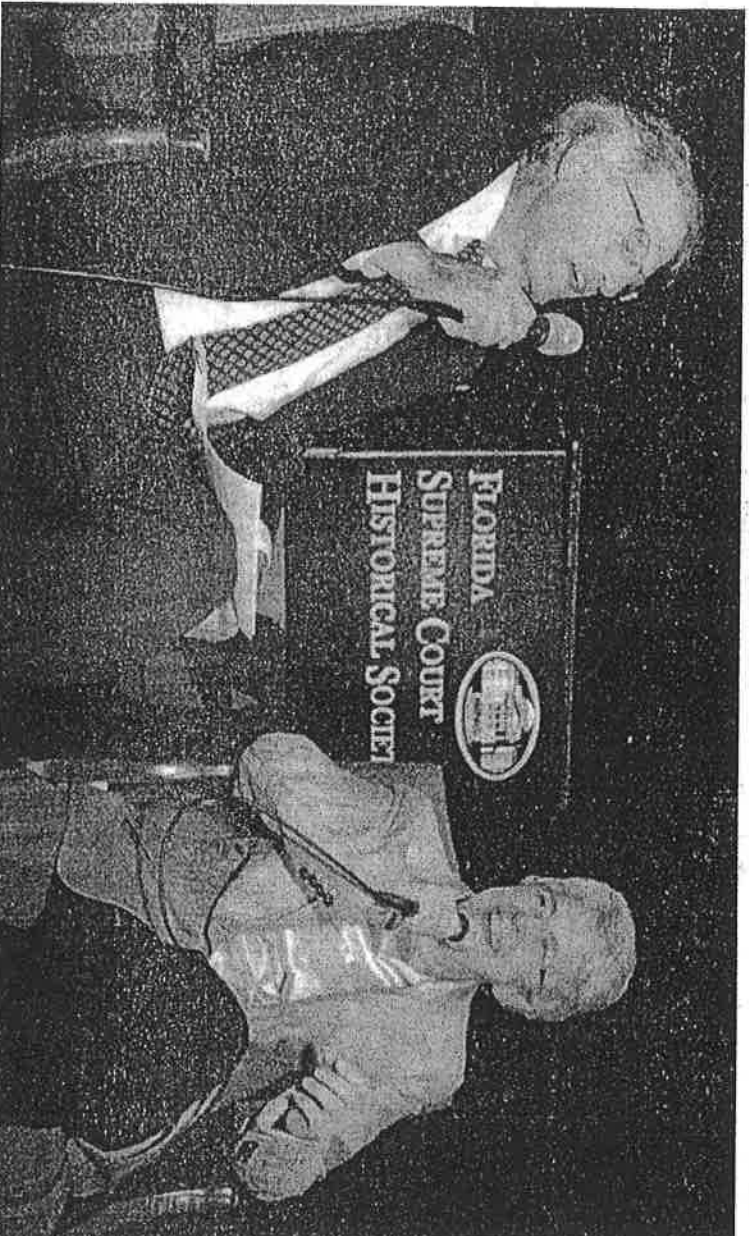
# The Florida Bar News

Volume 41, Number 5

floridabar.org

March 1, 2014

Larry Coltharp



JUDGE ROSEMARY BARKETT, with the help of Hank Cox, shared stories about her life, at the FSCHS dinner in Tallahassee.

## FSCHS honors Barkett for lifetime achievement

By Mark D. Kilian  
Managing Editor

From her a capella rendition of "Me and Bobby McGee," to stories about riding on the back of a Harley at a judicial conference and adjusting to life away from the convent, former Chief Justice Rosemary Barkett

Barkett served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, an appointment she held since 1994.

Ask Barkett what she's done lately, Pariente said, and you're likely to hear stories about hiking in Sardinia, her pilgrimage in the Pyrenees, or learning to ride a skateboard and about the critics

## Court urges all bars to get right with the ADA

By Jan Pudlow  
Senior Editor

One woman in a wheelchair — excluded from a voluntary bar social gathering in a basement wine cellar without an elevator — sparked a strong directive from the Florida Supreme Court: All bar meetings must be accessible to all.

Stephanie Woodward recently moved from Syracuse, N.Y., to Miami, passed the Florida bar exam, and awaits approval of her character and fitness check so she can be a full-fledged member of The Florida Bar. As a "baby lawyer" new to town, she is anxious to

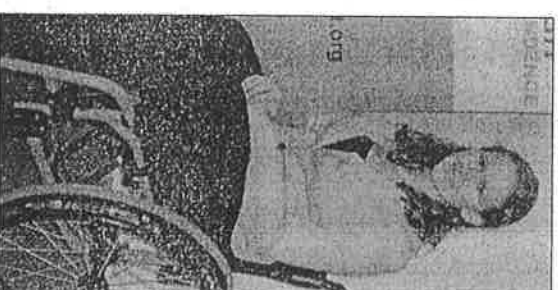
See ADA, page 9

## Panel to lobby against direct filing of children

Supports judges being responsible for making the decision as to whether a juvenile should be prosecuted as an adult

By Jan Pudlow  
Senior Editor

One of the Legal Needs of Children Committee's



WOODWARD

After following protocol to notify the Public Interest Law Section and the

make connections in the legal profession. So she was excited about an invitation to attend a Dade County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section event called "An Evening with the judges" — described as "an informal gathering to promote communication among the legal community and the bench."

Sure, she was welcome, even though she's not officially a lawyer yet, the Dade YLS president assured her.

But there was a big problem: The January 23 event was being held in the wine cellar — a former bomb shelter — of the restaurant Le Chat Noir, at 2 South Miami Avenue. There are a lot of steps and no elevator down to the wine cellar. And Woodward has a mobility disability and uses a wheelchair.

"If I hadn't thought to ask, I would have shown up in a wheelchair and seen a set of stairs, which would be embarrassing," Woodward said.

"I think it's a big deal for me to get in anywhere, not just local bar events. Access is not a convenience when it works best for them. Access is my civil right."

Chief Justice Ricky Polston agrees. When Woodward's excluding experience came to his attention, the entire court gathered for conference, resulting in strongly worded letters Polston sent on February 3 to voluntary bars and leaders at The Florida Bar.

"Benign neglect, oversight or indifference which produces this type of discrimination is simply not acceptable and will not be tolerated," Polston wrote.

"This event has demonstrated that we must do more to prevent similar discrimination in the future, and we shall take corrective steps to address the damage this type of discrimination inflicts."

After approval by the entire Florida Supreme Court, Polston directed The Florida Bar to "develop and implement a protocol for Bar-related activities at all levels to ensure compliance with all ADA and access requirements. We request The Florida Bar to report its progress to this court 60 days from this date and each 60 days thereafter until the directed protocol is implemented."

Similarly, the court requested that voluntary bar associations "immediately

all ADA and access requirements."

At The Florida Bar, Kathy Tucker, head of the Meetings Department, said she is well aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to

## **This event has demonstrated that we must do more to prevent similar discrimination in the future, and we shall take corrective steps to address the damage this type of discrimination inflicts.**

make sure meetings are accessible, but acknowledged there have been bumps along the way. For example, she said, the Bar can no longer use a particular ballroom at the Boca Raton Resort and Club, accessible only via stairs or small service elevator.

"The Bar is very conscious of the need to avoid using space that is not accessible to all," Tucker said.

The matter came to the high court's attention when Woodward, a new associate at the Disability Independence Group, in Miami, told her boss, Matt Dietz,

Dietz, a member of The Florida Bar Diversity and Inclusion Committee, let members know about the incident, as well as justices Fred Lewis and Peggy Quince, and Bar President Eugene Pettis.

"This was a concrete example of a person coming to the door and not being able to access our bar," Dietz said.

Justice Lewis jumped into action.

"When this issue arose, I immediately scheduled this issue for conference with the entire court," Justice Lewis said. "We must work together to eliminate all types of discrimination, and it will start with the Florida Supreme Court."

Pettis, who made diversity and inclusion a cornerstone of his presidency, said: "As we continue our efforts of total inclusion of all lawyers at every level of our Bar, it is imperative that we include persons with physical handicaps. While this incident in Miami was unfortunate, it has shed light on our need to be more sensitive and intentional in making sure every member is included and welcomed."

Dade County Bar President Leslie Smith said she agrees completely. She said she views it as an opportunity for the DCBA to take the initiative, create protocol, and share it with voluntary bars throughout the state. Attorneys with a variety of disabilities, along with leadership of the DCBA, will be gathering on March 25 to brainstorm and craft

to law school. I worked for what was then called Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, and I worked with the division that dealt with programming and funding for persons with disabilities," Smith said.

"The issues are not foreign to me, and though I am not personally affected and don't have any disabilities, I am certainly aware that we could do more and we have an opportunity to do that. I'm very excited about it."

Smith said she was not surprised that the incident reached the highest level of Florida's courts, because she was part of a dialog that went back and forth with Dietz, and she knew of his relationship with the Bar and Justice Lewis, "who has a very personal interest in this issue."

"I believe in advocacy. Get the word out. Things need to be changed and strided and improved. That's what advocates do," Smith

said.

But Woodward said, "It surprised me that it went that far. I'm thrilled the chief justice did say something about this, so that it's on everybody's radar. It shouldn't be an issue between just me and the Dade County Bar Association."

Dietz said Florida Bar leaders have been very supportive, and he appreciates the strong directive from the chief justice.

"I'm glad it is being handled in a top-down fashion. It demonstrates a commitment," Dietz said. "To have a commitment from the chief justice, the head of your state courts, is phenomenal and shows true dedication to and commitment to diversity and inclusion."



POLSTON

# Miami Herald

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2014 | \$1.00 | FINAL EDITION | MIAMIHERALD.COM

G H3

## LEGISLATURE 2014

### Teachers challenge testing for disabled students

■ The plight of students with disabilities and their teachers is garnering attention in Tallahassee.

BY KATHLEEN MCGRORY  
AND JEFFREY S. SOLOCHET  
Herald/Times Tallahassee bureau

**TALLAHASSEE** — While her 11-year-old son, Ethan, lay dying last month, Andrea Rediske had to convince the boy's school district he could not take the state tests.

Ethan's teacher made daily visits to assess his progress — even when he was in hospice care.

"Seriously?" Rediske wrote in a Feb. 4 email to Orange County School Board member Rich Roach. "Why is Ethan Rediske not meeting his sixth-

• TURN TO CHALLENGE, TA

## LEGISLATURE 2014

# Some worry about stress on students

• CHALLENGE, FROM 1A

Grade hospital-homebound curriculum requirements? BECAUSE HE IS IN A MORPHINE COMA. We expect him to go any day."

The boy died three days later.

As state education officials work to overhaul the education accountability system, the plight of severely disabled students like Ethan and their teachers is gathering increasing attention in the halls of the Florida Capitol.

On Wednesday, the state teachers union released a 10-minute video showing Polk County teachers giving standardized tests to four students with severe disabilities.

Separately, a Pasco County teacher raised concerns about testing special-needs students in a letter to Superintendent Kurt Browning. Her words carried to the highest level of state government, capturing the attention of Republican House Speaker Will

Weatherford.

"We need to do something about this for sure," Weatherford wrote in an email to Browning last week.

Florida lawmakers are poised to take action.

Earlier this month, Rep. Karen Castor Dentel, D-Maitland, filed a bill that would make it easier for students with disabilities to receive testing waivers.

Weatherford said he is willing to consider it.

"Ethan Rediske's heart-wrenching story highlighted that our requirements for assessments can be uncomfortable," he said in a statement provided to the Herald/Times. "I appreciate the proposals presented to address the problem and I look forward to seeing them get a fair hearing this session."

Weatherford might also be open to tweaking the teacher evaluation formula to provide some leeway to special-education teachers, he said in the letter to

Browning.

All students in Florida public schools are required to participate in the state assessment program.

The education department is in the process of selecting new tests. For now, most children take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT) and the state end-of-course exams.

Special-needs students can take an alternate assessment, and those with extreme disabilities can apply for an exemption from testing. But the request must be approved by the superintendent and the state education commissioner.

About 17 million Florida students take the annual statewide assessment. The education department received a total of 30 requests for exemptions from this year's assessments, a department spokesman said. Sixteen have been approved.

Ethan Rediske was granted a waiver only after his mother reached out to the media, his mother said.

The video released by the

Florida Education Association on Wednesday featured four special-needs students from Polk County who had to take the state tests.

Among them: 11-year-old Luis Medina, who is blind and in a persistent vegetative state.

In the video, a teacher shows Luis a series of drawings and asks him to answer questions. The boy, who has suffered brain damage, cannot understand or communicate.

"Right now, how they are testing my child is not the right way," said his mother, Maria Rivera. "He cannot tell you what he thinks or what he sees."

State Education Commissioner Pam Stewart defended the use of assessments for all students.

"We all know that the only way to guarantee success in any endeavor is to set goals and measure our progress," Stewart said. "In education, measuring progress is key to successful learning, and I firmly believe that every child enrolled in a public

school in Florida deserves the opportunity to have access to the best education possible. It would be a moral outrage to deny that opportunity to any child for any reason."

But teachers and school administrators have concerns about the practice.

Gisela Feild, who oversees testing and research for the Miami-Dade school district, worries about the stress on students.

"You have kids with special needs who have to sit for a test and are held accountable to the same standards as other children," she said. "The burden and the pressure on these kids is astronomical."

Sabrina Berger, a Pasco County teacher who has taught profoundly disabled students for 18 years, spent Wednesday testing a child who had to be given a cookie after each answer to help keep him focused.

"They're telling us to do things against what we've always done, what I know is right," she said.

Berger is also concerned

about the effect on her performance evaluation, which will be based partly on her students' test scores and could factor into her paycheck. She aired those concerns in a letter to Browning.

State education officials say the new "value-added" model for calculating teacher performance accounts for external factors, including whether a student has special needs. But like many other teachers, Berger questioned that premise.

"How can their brain damage and multiple challenges be ignored as barriers to achievement?" she wrote. "My students do make achievements, but not on things being evaluated by tests."

Contact Kathleen McGroarty at kmgroarty@miamiherald.com.

**MiamiHerald.com**  
Watch video of special needs students taking the required tests.