



to *life!*

Mayor's Initiative on Aging

This Report Was Made Possible by:

Health Foundation
of South Florida

“We have a moral obligation to care for those who cared for us. Whatever I can do to improve the lives of our seniors, I will.”

- Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez





OFFICE OF THE MAYOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

CARLOS ALVAREZ
MAYOR

May 2007

Dear Friends:

Seniors have always held a special place in my heart. This is why I launched an aging initiative, *To Life!*, in partnership with the Alliance for Aging and the Health Department's Consortium for a Healthier Miami-Dade. The initiative was designed to promote healthy lifestyles and safety, and connect Miami-Dade residents 55 and over with existing wellness and safety resources in the community, so they could make the best choices for their own wellbeing.

I'm proud of all of our accomplishments over the past two years:

- We educated thousands of seniors on the Medicare Part D prescription drug program.
- We trained dozens of senior service caregivers and professionals on fall and fire prevention, so they could share this information with the elderly.
- We held free accredited workshops for medical and health professionals on educating seniors about hurricane preparedness, healthy eating and how to properly take their medications.
- We held one-day Health Expos in the cities of Miami, Miami Beach, Goulds, North Dade, West Dade, and Little Haiti, where seniors received free blood pressure, bone density, balance, glaucoma, glucose and cholesterol screenings. They also participated in chair aerobics and Tai Chi classes. Additionally, seniors were provided with healthy snacks as well as wellness and safety information on local community resources and services.

As the first phase of *To Life!* comes to a close, I would like to thank all of our partners and sponsors. Their support and commitment helped make the initiative a success.

I will continue helping seniors in our community. Being aged should not be a burden that carries stress and undue hardship. We have a moral obligation to care for those, who cared for us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlos Alvarez", written over a white background.

Carlos Alvarez
Mayor

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FOREWORD

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, by 2030, the number of Americans aged 65 and older will more than double to 71 million older Americans, comprising roughly 20 percent of the U.S. population. In Miami Dade County the number of older adults (i.e., ages 60 and above) is estimated to be 447,317.

The growing number and proportion of older adults is increasing demands on the public health system and on medical and social services. The major causes of death today involve chronic diseases which lay a particularly heavy health and economic burden on older adults due to associated long-term illness, diminished quality of life, and greatly increased health care costs. The good news is that many of these chronic conditions are avoidable through known prevention measures.

Key measures include practicing a healthy lifestyle (e.g., regular physical activity, healthy eating, and avoiding tobacco use) and the use of early detection practices (e.g., screening for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers, diabetes and its complications, and depression).

In order to address the needs of our aging population, Health Foundation of South Florida was happy to join Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez, the Alliance for Aging Inc. and the Miami-Dade County Health Department's Consortium for a Healthier Miami-Dade to develop, implement and evaluate a wellness and safety community health initiative for adults ages 55 and older in Miami Dade County. This initiative was named the Mayor's Initiative on Aging: *To Life!*

The Mayor's Initiative on Aging: *To Life!* provided seniors with free resources to manage their health including free health screenings, free health educational materials and free fitness activities. One of the primary program objectives was to raise awareness on the importance of disease prevention and positive aging. As part of the initiative, information was disseminated to educate the elderly on the risks of high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which if left untreated, can lead to fatal events such as heart attacks and strokes.

Health Foundation of South Florida's Mayor's Initiative on Aging Final Report outlines the planning, structure, process, outcomes and lessons learned of this community health initiative with the hope that it will serve as a model for other communities.

Health Foundation strives to develop activities which can be measured to demonstrate outcomes and overall community impact. The success of this initiative was measured, not only by the participation of our citizens, but by the number of entities motivated and committed to support this effort. These contributions include community involvement, organization contributions, financial sponsorships and the leadership of those involved. In addition, seniors who participated in the Tai Chi intervention demonstrated improved balance and reported a better quality of life.

The future is bright, open and filled with opportunities. The State of Florida has received a grant from the Administration on Aging to start implementing best-evidence model programs among the state that will increase physical activity among older adults and improve their self-care disease management skills. Health Foundation of South Florida has also identified "Healthy Aging" as an area of interest for its strategic initiatives grant making program and is currently in the research and development phase of the project.

The programs and activities described here, can be seen as: a model of community involvement, what is possible when a community gets together, what is possible when a county acts together, and of the opportunities created by motivating others (individuals and groups) to act in benefit of us all.

We want to commend Mayor Carlos Alvarez and his staff for their vision and commitment to improving the health status of our Miami Dade County senior residents. We hope that this is only the beginning of a working relationship in which we all strive to ensure a healthy aging for older adults.

—Steven E. Marcus, Ed.D.
Health Foundation of South Florida
Executive Officer