

Human Services Coalition

Miami, FL

www.hscdade.org

www.prosperitycampaign.org

Est. 1995



The Human Services Coalition (HSC) was founded in 1995 with the broad goal of achieving “dignity in all of our communities” through promoting health and human services. Years later, the organization shifted its focus from solely promoting services and “pushed to become more socially entrepreneurial.” HSC’s mission now is to “support individuals, organizations and communities to create a more just, equitable and caring society” by promoting civic engagement, matching individuals to opportunities, and connecting people of Miami-Dade County to the tools, resources and education they need to improve their own and others’ health and prosperity.

Miami’s problem with affordable housing was exacerbated by the recent economic downturn. “Miami was once low wage–low cost and now is low wage–high cost, and that’s predominantly been driven by housing. Buildings that once were full of 20–30 percent median income resi-

dents are now full of 80 percent median income residents,” says HSC president Daniella Levine. The city’s immigration rate is growing rapidly and large buildings of rental units are being converted into luxury condominiums to meet the increased demand.

Also playing a large role in the city’s current housing crisis is the Miami-Dade Housing Agency. A *Miami Herald* investigation of the agency in 2006 found it had squandered millions of dollars from failed projects, pet programs and insider deals. In the six-part series “House of Lies,” *The Miami Herald* wrote, “Even when houses were built, some developers under the watch of the Housing Agency bypassed the poor and sold to real estate investors who turned quick profits.”¹

To meet the rising needs of Miami residents, HSC formed the first prosperity campaign in the United States in 2002. “The idea is that we’re all connected, that we need a strong

workforce, we need well-educated workers, we need strong families and strong communities, or our community cannot thrive,” said Levine.

The Prosperity Campaign, with strong alliance from the business community, connects people in need of financial stability with “everything that maximizes success.” Prosperity Centers provide residents with financial assistance, credit repair, homeownership counseling and most notably, free tax preparation. So far in 2010, the campaign’s centers have prepared 2,102 tax returns for a total of \$765,886 in federal returns, including \$4,851,526 in Earned Income Tax Credit.

Florida is expected to be one of the last states to make an economic recovery, but HSC remains determined. Levine says, “We know that the prosperity work is critical. We know that the civic work also is critical. Those two pillars – economic opportunity and civic participation – are the building blocks of what we do and at the end of the day, we’re about delivering those programs to the community and building the long-term capacity of people, of the organizations and the communities to sustain meaningful social change.” ■



HSC staff and community advocates with Florida Governor Charlie Crist during the organization’s annual visit to Tallahassee. Photo courtesy of Human Services Coalition.

1. Debbie Cenziper, Oscar Corral, and Larry Leibowitz, “House of Lies: Housing Agency is an ATM,” *The Miami Herald* 2006, <http://www.miamiherald.com/multimedia/news/houseoflies/part1/index.html>.