



Community

The Givers: Philanthropy in Action

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The Art of Giving Back

As the season of giving approaches, we find ourselves once again reflecting on our good fortune to be part of the Coral Gables community, and all the good that the community has done this year. And as we do each year, we've profiled a handful of the Gables' most prolific givers, all of whom have donated time, effort, and money to the causes closest to their hearts. Through volunteer work, anyone can be a giver, regardless of income or station. As one of our profiled givers, Alirio Torrealba, commented, "Start small. Find a cause that resonates with you and take the first step. You'll quickly see how impactful even the smallest actions can be." If you do choose to donate, we recommend using the Coral Gables Community Foundation. Donor-advised funds like those offered by the CGCF are an increasingly popular tool for philanthropists, offering tax benefits, simplicity, and investment growth. By creating a DAF through the Foundation, givers receive immediate tax benefits without having to make immediate donations, allowing them the time to be thoughtful about their charitable contributions. And the CGCF handles all the paperwork! However you choose to give, we hope you are inspired by the leaders in our community profiled in the following pages. Some have a particular focus, some are all over the place; some serve on local organizations' boards, and some travel the world in their giving adventures. All are making an impact on our City Beautiful. As another of our profiled givers, Judy Zeder, says, "I believe a city is only as good as the people who live in it. We have gotten so much from this city, my family and myself; we are so blessed and so grateful for all the city has given us... How could we not but give back?"

ASHLEY CUSACK



Photos By Jonathan Dann

Focus: Community

"I DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY. BUT I WAS LIKE, 'I'LL DO IT!'"

EWM realtor Ashley Cusack has been involved in philanthropy since she was 23. Arm-in-arm with a friend, the two were searching for a way "to do something good." "We thought, 'How are we going to get involved?'" says Cusack. "We had no idea. We had no skills. But we got involved in Junior League Miami and we learned so much."

The Junior League is an international organization of women committed to advancing women's leadership and improving community. Cusack joined the League's Inn Transition program, which provides housing and resources for women and children survivors of domestic violence. She volunteered to fundraise, despite having no experience. "I'd never asked anybody for money. I didn't have any money," says Cusack with a laugh. "But I was like, 'I'll do it!'"

Cusack remains on the board, for years donating 15 percent of her realty commissions to the League. She has also joined other organizations. She was chair of the Beaux Art Festival and the annual fund at Ransom

High School, where her children attended (and where she was a volunteer varsity lacrosse coach). Today, she's on the Orange Bowl Committee; co-chair of the capital campaign at St. Thomas Episcopal Parish School; on the board of the Coral Gables Community Foundation; on the Board of Trustees at Sewanee/The University of the South (another school her children attended); and a volunteer at Breakthrough Miami, an afterschool program for underprivileged students.

"Organization was never my strong suit," Cusack admits after she rattles off her various positions. "I just kind of say yes to people." When asked what she would put for her philanthropic focus, she jokes, "I think unfocused is probably the theme." — *Kylie Wang*