



**UM-NSU CARD Announces Winners of the 2019 Community Awards
And Celebrates 20 Years of Excellence in Broward County**

Coral Gables, FL – August 23, 2019 – On October 3rd the University of Miami-Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism & Related Disabilities (UM-NSU CARD) will hold its 14th Annual Community Awards luncheon at the University of Miami to honor 17 members of South Florida’s autism community for their tireless dedication, fearless persistence and philanthropic support.

“The UM-NSU CARD Community Awards were created in 2005 to recognize the employees, volunteers, charitable foundations and corporate partners who go the extra mile for our constituents. We greatly appreciate all that they do,” said Dr. Michael Alessandri who is the Executive Director of UM-NSU CARD. “Without all of them, our job serving more than 12,200 constituents throughout Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties would be that much more difficult. We are indebted to them.” We would also like to give a special thank you to Terra Group for their support of our luncheon.

This year, UM-NSU CARD is also celebrating 20 years of serving the autism community in Broward County. “The outstanding partnership between the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University has allowed us to exponentially expand our reach, and provide the resources needed to thousands of families. Together we have created one of the finest South Florida programs for citizens with autism and related disabilities,” said Dr. Alessandri.

“We hope that our award winners’ example of action in the community inspires many others to get involved and support the South Florida autism community,” said Alessandri.

This year’s winners of UM-NSU CARD’s Community Awards include:



Robin Parker Inspiration Award

Dr. Melissa Hale

Dr. Hale was the overwhelming choice for this award this year. Her colleagues selected her because she best represents the compassion, love, kindness, generosity, and professionalism of our beloved colleague, Dr. Robin Parker. In addition to being Associate Director of UM-NSU CARD, Dr. Hale is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, a co-Director of the UM Master’s Program in Applied Behavior Analysis, and the Faculty Advisor for the Autism Spectrum Assessment Clinic.



Outstanding UM-NSU CARD Volunteer

Jose Roman

Jose is a remarkable young man who gives tirelessly to UM-NSU CARD. He brings energy, enthusiasm, and a true commitment to our cause. We are so grateful that Jose shows up to support so many of our community outreach events. His help is so appreciated by staff, board, and the families who come out to enjoy our events. His smile always lights up the room and puts everyone at ease.



Outstanding Professional - Miami-Dade County

Dr. Meaghan Parlade

Dr. Parlade is a stellar University of Miami-based psychologist who is part of the Autism Spectrum Assessment Clinic and the UM PCIT program. She is also a major contributor to many UM autism research projects, grants, and publications. She graduated from UM and earned her Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. Afterwards she returned to UM for her post-doctoral before accepting her current position as a Psychologist in the Department of Psychology.



Outstanding Professional - Broward County

Ysela Heim

Ysela Heim, the founder of Special Education Advocacy Services, LLC, has been a tireless advocate for students with disabilities in South Florida for many years. She is a wonderful UM-NSU CARD partner who serves many of our families in need of first-rate advocacy services. In addition to her professional advocacy work, Ysela is a former Chairperson and member of the UM-NSU CARD Constituency Board and has also chaired Tropical Nights.



Outstanding Professional - Monroe County

Dolores Mendoza

Although she lives in Miami-Dade County, where she served the MDCPS Pre-K program for many years with such professionalism and compassion, this year we recognize Dolores Mendoza with the Outstanding Professional Award for her work in Monroe County. Dolores heard about our desire to provide more on-site services in the Keys, and she graciously volunteered her expertise. In early 2019, she generously provided free classes in positive parenting practices for young children over a 7-week period for families in Monroe County.



Outstanding School Partner - Miami-Dade County

Eva Jakob

Eva is a District Autism Support Teacher for Miami Dade County Public Schools where she provides consultation and training for teachers serving students with ASD. Not only is Eva exceptionally talented in this role, she has also proven to be an instrumental and highly respected partner; her collaboration on individual cases and school initiatives has been invaluable.



Outstanding School Partner - Broward County

Pam Baron

Pam Baron has worked for many years in the Broward County school system, serving many different roles. She has provided consultation, training and guidance to many students, teachers and staff over the years. She has been a valuable UM-NSU CARD partner and collaborator. Congratulations to Pam!



Outstanding School Partner - Monroe County

Linda Diaz

Linda Diaz is the Secondary Transition Specialist/Parent Liaison for Exceptional Student Education for Monroe County Schools and has been UM-NSU CARD's liaison with the school district for the past five years. Linda has encouraged schools to refer families to register with UM-NSU CARD, scheduled intake appointments for us at various schools, and facilitated numerous trainings for school personnel and families.



Outstanding Community Partner - Miami-Dade County

UM PCIT

The UM Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a parent training and coaching program, funded by The Children's Trust, for young children with difficult behavior in Miami-Dade County. Under the leadership of Dr. Jason Jent, the UM PCIT team includes Dr. Allison Weinstein, Dr. Eileen Davis, Dr. Dainelys Garcia, and Dr. Meaghan Parlade. The team has partnered closely with UM-NSU CARD to expand this valuable program and offer this service to families of young children diagnosed with ASD.



Outstanding Community Partner - Broward County

Jason Miletsky

Jason has served many different roles in the Broward school system for more than 20 years. He is currently the founder and president of the Exceptional Fitness Foundation which provides unique fitness and exercise programs to individuals with special needs. Jason and his foundation have been great collaborators with UM-NSU CARD and other organizations.



Outstanding Community Partner - Monroe County

Behavior Analysis, Inc. -

Dr. David Garcia & Mary Knowles

Although Behavior Analysis Inc. (BAI) is located in Broward and Miami-Dade, BAI has helped expand UM-NSU CARD's services throughout Monroe County. This past year BAI provided two workshops and several days of home consultations with families. Dr. David Garcia, facilitated the administrative logistics of our partnership, and Mary Knowles, Clinical Supervisor at BAI, traveled to the Keys to share information and provide individualized consultations.



Outstanding Business Partner – Miami-Dade County

South Florida PBS

Since 2016, South Florida PBS has been hosting paid internships for adults with ASD. During this time, they have participated in staff trainings and have truly been partners with UM-NSU CARD in their dedication to providing a positive employment experience to individuals with ASD with an interest in broadcasting and communication. South Florida PBS creates a welcoming environment for their interns, and in addition to the paid internship they have extended offers of permanent employment to some of the interns.



Outstanding Self Advocate

Jairo Arana

Jairo began his journey as a self-advocate after receiving his diagnosis and participating in UM-NSU CARD's Job SEEKers Program. He participated and graduated from the UM Mailman Center for Child Development Project SALT (Self-Advocate Leadership Training) Program. After graduating, he became a trainer for Project SALT and a consultant for the UM Mailman Center for Child Development. He was also the UM Mailman Center for Child Development's first LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) Self-advocate trainee. He holds Bachelor's Degrees of Arts and Science in Communication/Motion Pictures and in English/Creative Writing, from UM and works full-time at the UM Mailman Center as a Clinical Program Coordinator.



Outstanding UM-NSU CARD Philanthropist

Hector Ortiz of the Twin Plum Foundation & the Atienza Family

Thanks to Hector Ortiz of the Twin Plum Foundation, and the Atienza Family for their gracious support of Tropical Nights, UM-NSU CARD's signature annual fundraiser, we are able to provide many of our services and community programs to our constituent families at no cost.



UM-NSU CARD Community Leadership Award

The Cambo Family

This extraordinary family has been part of the UM-NSU CARD family since the very beginning. Their support over the years has been invaluable to the work we do and for the entire South Florida Autism Community. They have been inspirational and impactful leaders in supporting the development and expansion of many critical services, organizations, and schools in our community.

About UM-NSU CARD

UM-NSU CARD is a state-funded resource and support program dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with autism and related disabilities including deaf-blindness and pervasive developmental disorders. CARD is based at 7 universities throughout Florida including the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University, which together form UM-NSU CARD in South Florida.

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