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Contact: Patricia Maldonado
patricia@littlefishmedia.net
305.490.8831

The Education Fund & Wells Fargo celebrate volunteers and student culinary stars, raising \$99,000 for programs in local public schools

MIAMI (May 2, 2022) – After a two-year hiatus, The Education Fund’s annual Teach-a-Thon, presented by Wells Fargo, and its victory event, the Taste of Education returned. More than 100 business executives stepped into the shoes of a teacher, raising awareness for the need to support our public schools. The Education Fund’s teaching campaign and the event raised a combined \$99,000 to support public education in Miami-Dade.

“We couldn’t be more excited by the outcome of these two efforts that had been put on hold because of the pandemic,” said Linda Lecht, president of The Education Fund. “Having the opportunity to have business leaders experience what a teacher does opened their eyes to the pivotal role teachers play. Equally important, especially due to COVID-created disillusionment in education, students saw their lessons as relevant to their future as the business people showed them how various subjects connect to the world outside of school.”

The event also honored the 100 volunteers in the 2022 Teach-A-Thon presented by Wells Fargo. The campaign fosters awareness of the teaching profession while raising money for educators and their students. This year business professionals from Wells Fargo, Assurant, Kaufman Rossin, Sapoznik Insurance, and dozens of other businesses stepped into the shoes of public school teachers in K-12 classrooms throughout Miami-Dade. Top executives that participated included Hector Ponte, Wells Fargo; Angela Burgess, Assurant; Nick Tootle, Kaufman Rossin; Julie Balzano, MarineMax; Aleef Adam, Sirius, a CDW company; Jackie Martinez-Sancho, Humana and many others.

“As a board member of The Ed Fund, proud graduate of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, father of three public school graduates, and the son, husband and father of teachers, participating in the Teach-A-Thon provides a perspective like none other,” says Hector J. Ponte, South Florida region banking director for Wells Fargo. “I personally get to witness the level of preparation that’s involved and the important work educators are responsible for in our community.”

In March, The Education Fund’s Taste of Education recognized the business leaders while both encouraging and celebrating the culinary talents of students in middle and high schools. The event, at the iconic Hialeah Park, showcased students from 17 culinary programs who competed in 27 teams, preparing gourmet bites and vying for prizes. The event supported all participating culinary programs with \$20,000 in grants to buy supplies and equipment for their school kitchens.

A culinary panel featuring celebrity chefs Ralph Pagano, Allen Susser, Letty Alvarez, Dayanny De La Cruz, and Max Santiago among others judged the competition, awarding first and second place awards. Miami Spring Senior High swept the awards, winning 5 of the 14 awards given in total.

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About The Education Fund: The Education Fund brings innovative methods to our local public schools, informs the community about public education, and encourages private sector investment in public education. Due to its success in improving student outcomes, including improving science scores by 84 percent, eating habits by 52 percent and college enrollment by 34 percent. The Education Fund has won numerous awards, including the Greater Miami Chamber’s NOVO Award for Non-Profit Excellence and the Sapphire Award. Visit educationfund.org.

The Culinary Champions of the 2022 Taste of Education

- **Best Meat Dish:** Miami Springs Senior High School, "Slow & Low Street Tacos"
Runner Up: Miami Jackson Senior High School, "Jerk Chicken Sushi"
- **Best Seafood Dish:** Redland Middle School, "Mtuiz wa Samaki (Fish Curry)"
Runner Up: Ronald Regan Doral Senior High School, "Corvina Ceviche"
- **Best Vegetarian Dish:** Miami Springs Senior High School, "Sherron Sushi Roll"
Runner Up: American Senior High School, "Mysterious Stuffed Mushroom"
- **Best Dessert Dish:** Lamar Louise Curry Middle School, "Strawberry Filled Nutella Cupcakes"
Runner Up: Jorge Mas Canosa Middle School, "Paradise Cakes"
- **Best Visual Presentation:** Miami Springs Senior High School, "Sherron Sushi Roll"
Runner Up: Miami Springs Senior High School, "Slow & Low Street Tacos"
- **Best Sales Pitch:** Miami Springs Senior High School, "Slow & Low Street Tacos"
Runner Up: Lamar Louise Curry Middle, "Strawberry Filled Nutella Cupcakes"
- **People's Choice Awards:** Miami Springs Senior High School, "Slow & Low Street Tacos"
Runner Up: Lamar Louise Curry Middle School, "Strawberry Filled Nutella Cupcakes"

People's Choice Awards Sponsored by Sapoznik and Colonial Life