

# The Miami Herald

## Carnival Foundation donates \$5 million to Big Brothers Big Sisters

By Hannah Sampson  
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Arnold Donald, left, president and CEO of Carnival Corporation, and Linda Coll, director of Carnival Foundation, second from right, present Lydia Muniz, right, president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, a \$5 million donation to create the Carnival Center for Excellence. The event took place Wednesday at Carnival's Doral headquarters. Mentors and students who participate in Carnival's school-to-work program also attended ANDY NEWMAN/CARNIVAL FOUNDATION

Shown is a rendering of the Carnival Center for Excellence, the future home of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami. BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF MIAMI

More than 20 years after making its first donation to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, Carnival Foundation on Wednesday will announce a \$5 million gift to help the nonprofit organization move into a permanent home.

The donation — the largest ever given to the Miami chapter of the national mentoring organization — will go toward the \$7 million purchase and modification of a building at 550 LeJeune Rd. in Miami. The sale of the building, which will be called the Carnival Center for Excellence, closed Tuesday evening.

“It’s been a process, a relationship developing over many years with many layers and many levels of participation and contribution,” said Lydia Muniz, president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami. “And it’s really a very, very exciting moment and day and occasion for myself and for our organization.”

Linda Coll, director of the philanthropic arm of Doral-based Carnival Corp., said Carnival employees have for years mentored high school students in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Carnival Foundation also provides college scholarships to 15 students every year through the scholarship and mentoring program.

“It became very apparent moving forward with this relationship the difference they were making in the lives of young people,” Coll said. Knowing that the organization was looking for a permanent building to expand its reach and offer more programming, Coll said the foundation was motivated to get involved in a major way.

“We just really wanted to be the ones to step up and make this lead gift,” she said.

Muniz said the mentoring organization is seeking \$20 million through a capital campaign.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, which has outgrown its 8,000-square-foot space in a Little Havana office building, plans to relocate in the first quarter of 2016. Muniz said the organization initially plans to use about 23,000 square feet of the 43,000-square-foot facility and lease out the rest.

When the new building is ready, the nonprofit group will have office space for more than 50 employees, as well as a digital learning center and library. Tutoring and family classes are slated to roll out in the first year.

Muniz said Big Brothers Big Sisters works with more than 2,100 pairs of mentors and youths every year. Over the next five to eight years, she said, the goal is to grow that number to 5,000 pairs.

“That is the vision,” she said.