

**For Immediate Release**

**MEDIA CONTACT**

**Beatriz Bellorin**  
**BBellorin@BeAVoice.org**  
**(786) 469-3865**

**Voices For Children Raises More Than \$125,000 AT 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual 'Be A Voice Luncheon'**

**MIAMI – October 23, 2017 – [Voices For Children Foundation](#)**, a Miami non-profit organization advocating for children in foster care, along with presenting sponsor Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson P.A., served as hosts to approximately 300 attorneys, judges, elected officials, community leaders, volunteers and supporters at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual “Be A Voice Luncheon” held on **Friday, October 20, at Coral Gables Country Club, 997 North Greenway Drive Coral Gables, Miami, 33134**. Local 10 News anchor Laurie Jennings served as the emcee.

With help from supporters, Voices For Children Foundation raised over \$125,000. The money will help ensure that abused, abandoned and neglected children in Miami-Dade County have a court-appointed Guardian ad Litem and that resources are available to support their health, educational and social needs.

During the event, Voices For Children continued to educate and raise awareness about child abuse, foster care, the importance of the Guardian ad Litem program, and working together with different organizations to improve the lives of children in the dependency system. Jay Shapiro, Voices For Children Chair, acknowledged the organization's fundraising success over the last year and highlighted the increase of Guardian ad Litem representation in Miami Dade County. Kwantisa Harris, a talented young woman that experienced foster care and a graduate of Voices For Children's It Takes A Village Program, gave a touching testimonial about her experience in the system and how she has been able to stand up and succeed thanks to her perseverance and focus on education. Nelson Hincapie, Voices For Children President and CEO presented the Leadership Award to Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez recognizing his exemplary commitment over the years to Voices For Children and children's causes. During his acceptance speech the Mayor touched on the importance of breaking the cycle of abuse in saying *“By healing one individual, you heal all the generations that follow.”*

Mike Dunlavy, former foster youth who currently is a skilled litigation lawyer and child advocate, was awarded with the Pathfinder Award. The honor acknowledges former foster youth that have overcome adversity and have succeeded reaching their goals. For Mike *“Opportunity is only half the battle. We could create all the opportunity in the world for these young people, but we don't teach them that they can do it. If we don't provide the emotional support and stability, I don't see them really taking the opportunities and stepping through the door and showing us what great things they really have in store.”*

In addition to Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, which has sponsored the Annual Be A Voice Luncheon for eleven consecutive years, the event was made possible by Gold Guardian sponsors including: Miami-Dade County Commissioners: Sally A. Heyman, Bruno Barreiro, Jose “Pepe” Diaz, Denisse C. Moss and Xavier Suarez; and Silver Sponsors: Avolon, Mr. and Mrs.

Jeffrey Berkowitz, Mr. and Mrs. Scott Robins and Plaza Construction. Brickell Magazine and Selecta Magazine were the event's media sponsors.

### **About Voices For Children Foundation**

Voices For Children Foundation is a non-profit organization that raises money to help ensure that abused, abandoned, and neglected children in Miami-Dade County each have a court-appointed Guardian ad Litem and that financial assistance and other resources are available for their health, educational, and social needs. Guardians ad Litem are trained, court-appointed adults who serve as their representative voices in dependency court proceedings. Currently, almost 2,700 children are in Miami-Dade County's Foster Care system, and 427 children are unrepresented by Guardians ad Litem. For more information, please visit [www.BeAVoice.org](http://www.BeAVoice.org).