



# GWEN CHERRY PARK FOUNDATION



(305) 694-4889



info@gwencherrypark  
foundation.org



7090 N.W. 22nd Avenue  
Miami, FL 33147

# Annual Report

## 2022



*"It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men."*

*- Frederick Douglass*



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# About Us

The Gwen Cherry Park Foundation, Inc. was established in 1997 as a tax exempt 501(c) (3) organization to provide advocacy and fundraising to support programming at Gwen Cherry Park. The Foundation works with its community partners to ensure that children and families in the neighborhood receive first-class park programming and facilities. The Foundation is led by a Board of Directors that sets policies for advocacy, and raising and disbursing grants and financial assistance to support the work on behalf of youth who are provided services at Gwen Cherry Park. The long-term goal of the Foundation is to build an endowment large enough to guarantee that there will be sufficient funds to adequately support programming at Gwen Cherry Park in perpetuity.



## Mission

**The mission of the Gwen Cherry Park Foundation is to advocate and fundraise to support the academic, athletic, health, cultural and social programming at Gwen Cherry Park.**



# Chairman's Report

**HT Smith** Board Chairman

2022 was a year of renewal for the children at Gwen Cherry Park as the once in a century COVID-19 pandemics began to subside. Since March of 2020, the pandemic has caused significant disruption to the lives of our children in our After School program, sports program, health and wellness program, and general park activities.

However, as covid protocols were lessened and then released in 2022, the children at Gwen Cherry Park experienced a banner year of learning, playing, and experiencing the joy of being back together again. Our most anticipated event of the year by our children is the Christmas Festival. This year's 6th Annual Christmas Festival was fully in-person, and we gave away the most toys ever for the children. We also gave special prizes to students who excelled in school and at the NFL YET Center. As always, we were treated to show stopping dance performances by Simone's Just Dance Performing Arts Studio.

On a somber but proud note, we dedicated the naming of the state-of-the-art \$1.5 million football field in honor of Corey Smith. Somber because Corey was the innocent victim of gun violence. Proud because Corey was a legendary football coach for the Gwen Cherry Bulls who built young boys into champions on the field, in the classroom, and in the community. We were also proud that Corey's wife,

family, and friends participated in this momentous ceremony.

Gwen Cherry Park was operating with excitement each and every month. We opened our Nature Playground and Zip Line which was headlined by Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and Miami-Dade County Commission Chairman Oliver Gilbert. Both of them enjoyed the Zip Line as much as the kids.

Overall, 2022 was a mighty good year. Now we look forward, with great anticipation, to 2023 where we will continue to improve our After School program; to provide more field trips for the kids; to improve our swimming program to save lives; and to establish a first-class Music and Media Studio in the NFL YET Center at Gwen Cherry Park. Life is good!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HT Smith', written in a cursive style.

# Nature Playground & Zip Line



The Nature Playground is a fun space with equipment where children can play and learn outside while communing with and learning about nature. The Nature Playground has swings, rides, and a Zip Line that allows riders to traverse the playground while riding a steel cable on a protective seat. Our nature playground has many plants and butterflies that are indigenous to the state of Florida. Experts agree that children need access to nature the same way they need good nutrition.



# Kids are our Future





# Dr. Martin Luther King Day of Service

MLK Day of Service is a day that children at Gwen Cherry Park spend time volunteering to work to provide service to others. At Gwen Cherry Park, celebrating the holiday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a day on, not a day off. Our children learn the value of serving others and feel the pride that comes with working to make other people's lives better.

Many of the children speak fondly of working with other children to improve their community and make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate. As Dr. King taught us,

***"Life's most persistent and urgent question is what are you doing for others".***





# Corey Smith Football Field Dedication

On April 29, 2022, the Gwen Cherry Park family held a Dedication Ceremony to name its state-of-the-art, \$1.5 million Football Field in honor of Coach Corey Smith. Coach Smith coached at Gwen Cherry Park for 13 years and was one of the most successful football coaches in the history of Gwen Cherry Park. He built young boys into champions on and off the football field and was revered by his players and their families. Tragically, he was killed because of gun violence. The Dedication Ceremony was led by his wife Amina who gave words of inspiration and appreciation to Coach Smith’s former players, coaches, and the entire Gwen Cherry Park family.



Dignitaries in attendance included Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, District 2 Commissioner Jean Monestime, Parks Director Maria I. Nardi, and the Gwen Cherry Park Foundation Board members. Amina established the Corey Smith Scholarship Fund to help support young people from the community who want to attend college.



# 6th Annual Christmas Celebration

The 6th Annual Christmas Festival was a resounding success. Santa arrived early to greet over 800 kids who spent the first few hours outside playing games, rock climbing, jumping in bounce houses, riding in race cars, shooting basketballs, and much more.

The program then moved inside the gym where every child received a new toy, and kids who achieved in school or in the After School Program received special gifts, including bicycles and tablets.

The highlight of the festival again this year was the exciting dances performed by the talented dancers of Simone's Just Dance Performing Arts Studio.





**Special guests included District 2 County Commissioner Marliene Bastien, Parks Director Maria Nardi, Radio Personality Papa Keith, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Miami-Dade Alex Rodriguez-Roig, and Elaine Black and Jerry Sawyer of the Gwen Cherry Park Foundation.**



# Student Highlights

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Aniyah Taylor is our female student of excellence for 2022. Aniyah is an eight-year-old 2nd grade student who attends KIPP Courage Academy. Her favorite subjects are Mathematics and Language Arts. This is her first year attending the After School Program located in NFL Youth Education Town at Gwen Cherry Park. She is a high achiever who works hard and plays hard. Aniyah's favorite component of the After School Program is Kidzlit. This is a program for reading enrichment designed specifically for use in out-of-school settings. It increases young people's motivation to read and builds their literacy skills. Aniyah enjoys attending the After School Program with her cousin and friends to work on her homework, and then relax after a long day at school. We expect great things for Aniyah in the years to come.



## Aniyah Taylor

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## Neko Rozier

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Neko Rozier is our male academic standout at Gwen Cherry Park for 2022. Neko is a 10-year-old 5th grade student at Henry E. S. Reeves K-8 Center Primary Academy. He has been attending the After School Program at Gwen Cherry Park for a few years and likes participating in the program with other kids. His favorite subject is Mathematics. Neko is a serious student who works hard and earns good grades. He also enjoys playing sports, and he likes football and kickball. Neko is a good student, a good kid, and a good participant in the After School Program.

# Guardian Angel Award

The Guardian Angel Award is presented to individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the mission of the NFL YET Center at Gwen Cherry Park. These contributions include volunteerism, philanthropy, fundraising and service. Past recipients of the Guardian Angel Award include former Miami Dade County Commissioners Dorrin Rolle and Jean Monestime; Miami Dade County Parks Director Maria Nardi; co-founder of the NFL YET Center Dean Colson; NFL YET Center Construction Manager Art Xiques; and former educator and college football official Virgil Valdez.

The Gwen Cherry Park Foundation awarded its prestigious Guardian Angel Award to **Bobby Johnson**, the former Manager of the NFL Youth Education Town Center at Gwen Cherry Park. Bobby served the children and families at Gwen Cherry Park with competence, compassion, and a consistent commitment to excellence. He was well known, highly respected, and truly loved in the community.

Engraved on the plaque presented to Bobby is, "For your 22 years of extraordinary leadership as Manager of the NFL Youth Education Town, and for your love and devotion to the children and families at Gwen Cherry Park. Thank you for giving our kids positive programs to "SAY YES" to".



Upon receiving the award, Bobby said, "Receiving the Guardian Angel Award was the honor of all honors". In the past, I've had the privilege to congratulate others who were recipients of this award. Therefore, I knew it was an award that was only given to those who played an important role in supporting the YET Center and positively impacting the lives of our children. When the award was presented to me, it was unexpected and left me speechless. Words alone cannot express how much I value the years working alongside the Gwen Cherry Park Foundation, its members, and its mission. I will be forever grateful for this award."

# Prom & Graduation

The children at Gwen Cherry Park had a festive time celebrating their Prom and Graduation. They dressed up in their "Sunday best" to stroll down the red carpet, dance, and take pictures to memorialize this important rite of passage.

The girls looked pretty in their beautiful and colorful dresses, and the boys looked handsome in their suits and ties. It was wonderful to see their parents and other family members beaming with pride as they appreciated their achievements in school, and their personal growth in the After School Program, the community, and at home.



# Thanksgiving

## Around the World

This year, Thanksgiving was celebrated with a festive and fun Family Thanksgiving Dinner. Families were treated to a full Thanksgiving Dinner and entertainment. Also, over 200 turkeys and food supplies were passed out by Miami Dolphins' defensive players Xavien Howard and Emmanuel Ogbar. Additionally, Publix Super Markets gave away 50 turkeys to Gwen Cherry Park Families.



# Activities



**Zoo Miami**



**Baseball Club**



**WNBA Player Erica Wheeler**



**Field Day**



**Homecoming**



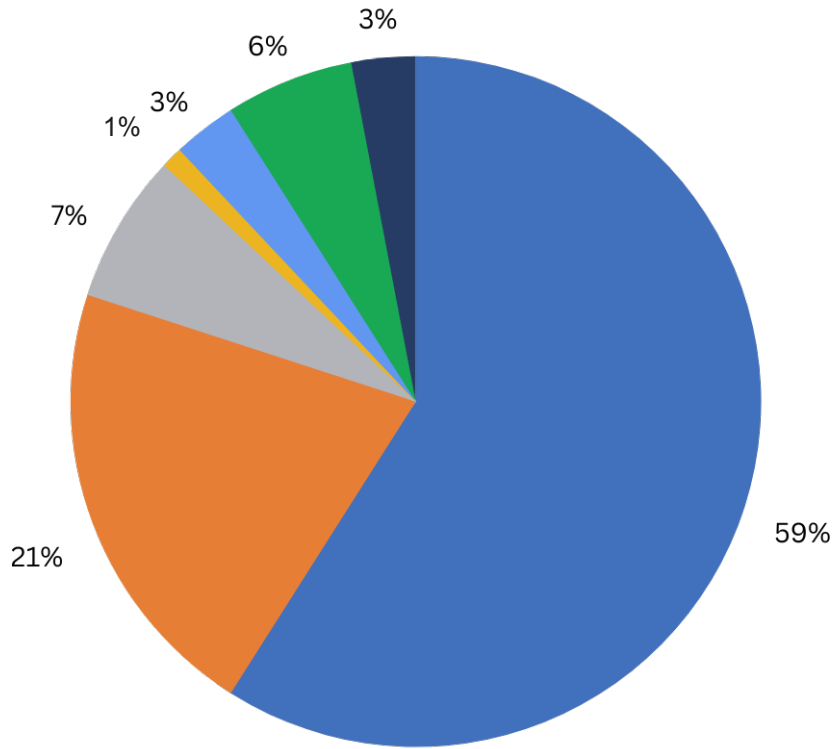


Mayor Cava was quoted as saying, "We want all of our residents and visitors to feel safe and enjoy a wonderful day of music and fun without fear. This collaboration is a huge step towards safer communities for all". Going forward, the Gwen Cherry Park Foundation is leading efforts to bring Night Basketball leagues to the inner city. As Chairman H.T. Smith stated, " would you rather have young men in the street at night shooting guns or inside the gym at night shooting hoops".

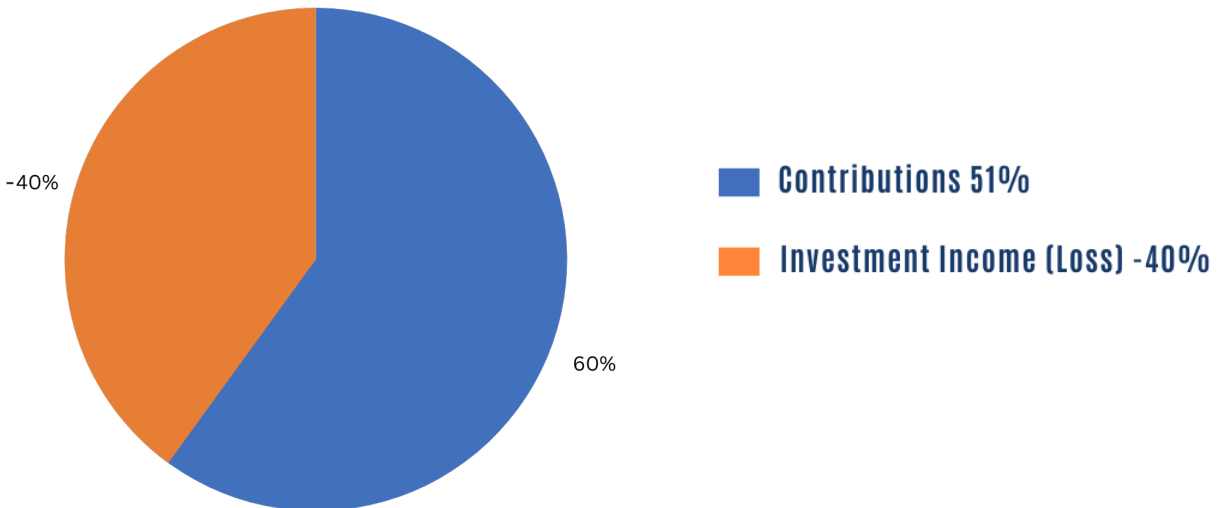
## Mayor Cava and Papa Keith Fun Day

Radio personality Papa Keith and Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava partnered to host a Fun Day at Gwen Cherry Park. The purpose was to provide positive activities for children and young adults to celebrate a "24 Cease Fire" where young people are encouraged to put down their guns for one full day. The Fun Day included a hip-hop festival, sporting events, rides, family fun, and more. Fun Day is the brainchild of radio personality Papa Keith. He said that "my goal is to unite people, suppress gun violence, and create a community using hip-hop to show that we do good things in our community".

# Expenditures



- Grants & Activities 59%
- Education 21%
- Professional Services 7%
- Marketing, Website & Fundraising 1%
- Rent 3%
- Investment Fees 6%
- Administrative/General 3%



# Donors List



Bonita Adams  
Nelson L. Adams  
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Wendell Graham  
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Marilyn Holifield  
Marilyn Holifield  
Marilyn Holifield  
Gerald Hubbard  
Chiaka Ihekweba  
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Flora Jackson  
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Community Empowerment  
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Miami-Dade County  
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Publix Super Markets, Inc.  
Trio Foundation of St. Louis  
Truist Bank  
Williamson Automotive Group

# Gwen Cherry Park Foundation Board of Directors



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**Elaine Black**  
Secretary



**Jerry Sawyer**  
Director



**Royceka Hanna**  
Administrative Assistant

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Community Center Manager



**JESSICA DANIELS**  
PROS Stewardship Manager



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Office Support Specialist



**ARTHUR OLD III**  
Facility Maintenance  
Attendant



**DASHAWN JONES**  
Park Service Aide



**ERNST COMPERE**  
Park Service Aide



**RENAUD LAUTURE**  
Park Service Aide



**LYDIA RODRIGUEZ**  
Park Service Aide



**LAMONT BAILEY**  
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## Recreation Staff



**BRITTANI MCCRAY-FLEUREME**  
PROS Recreation Manager



**CASSANDRA HARVEY**  
PROS Recreation Manager



**EARIANNA DAVIS**  
Recreation Service Aide



**MALAIKA MENTOR**  
Recreation Service Aide



**ROY LAING**  
Recreation Service Aide



**SHAKUR WIGFALL**  
Recreation Service Aide



**RICKIA BARBARY**  
Recreation Service Aide

# Partners

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7090 N.W. 22nd Avenue Miami, FL 33147

Phone: (305) 694-4889

[info@gwencherryparkfoundation.org](mailto:info@gwencherryparkfoundation.org)

[www.gwencherryparkfoundation.org](http://www.gwencherryparkfoundation.org)



GwenCherryParkFoundation

Produced by:

Dr. Tisa McGhee of

**Mc<sup>3</sup>**  
CONSULTING INC.  
Assessment | Training | Evaluation

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