



Manny Mencia's trade missions, aid to Florida companies stand out. Photo by Maxima Usdan

International business pervades community

BY ZACHARY FAGENSON

Few, if any, parts of Miami-Dade County remain untouched by international business.

It's not, however, done only at the Port of Miami. It's in Coral Gables and Westchester, when the University of Miami and Florida International University bring in students from around the world. It happened across Miami when some of the largest Spanish banks in recent years took over home-grown institutions like TotalBank and City National Bank.

And in banking, the Beacon Council's Mario Sacasa, who heads international economic development programs, nominated **Dario Fuentes**, general manager of Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo's Miami office and Florida International Bankers Association president.

"He's really placed Caja Mediterráneo on the map locally," Mr. Sacasa said. He also highlighted Mr. Fuentes' work at FIBA establishing official relationships with other organizations like the Beacon Council and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to establishing those relationships in hopes of giving the association's initiatives longevity, he's been working to further cement Miami's global ties.

"We are trying to approach and connect Europe with the United States," he said. Some of its members last month were in Madrid for a conference FIBA helped organize that looked at challenges bankers face across the globe, particularly the sovereign debt problems in Europe.

"With all these things going on, regulations being issued on both sides of the world," Mr. Fuentes said, "it's important we work as a bridge to connect both continents."

Asked who he thought has stood out in the international realm in the past year, he quickly pointed to **Manny Mencia**, Enterprise Florida's senior vice president of international trade and business development, as one person at the top of his game.

"We recognized his work last year in our juried event," Mr. Fuentes noted. "He has helped a lot in connecting and introducing the new governor to FIBA, and we've worked together in International Days and on different topics where we talk about



Dario Fuentes established links in community for global bankers.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

the impact the finance industry is having on the economy."

In fact, it was nearly impossible to get anyone who deals with international business to talk about anyone other than Mr. Mencia when it came to leaders in the sector.

"He's running a lot of trade missions, for one thing," said Sharyn Koenig, regional director of the Export-Import Bank's Southeast region. "I know he's got Peru and Chile coming up this month, and I think he's also involved in the Brazilian one coming in October."

That trip to Brazil in October is to be led by Gov. Rick Scott as a "Team Florida" mission.

For Mr. Mencia, this past year has been spent helping Florida companies start or expand their exports.

"100% of the manufacturer growth in Florida since 2003 has come from exports," he said. Helping those business tap markets abroad has been a continual focus.

"I'm convinced that for Florida companies, export is the best option to grow," Mr. Mencia continued. "The second priority has been expanding our presence in key markets worldwide by launching this Brazil market entry mission we're working on."

On top of that, the agency has recently opened an office in São Paulo, along with others in Shanghai and Montreal, in hopes of deepening ties with some of Florida's most prominent business partners.

Dedicated environmental leaders strive to keep Miami-Dade green

BY ASHLEY HOPKINS

In a time when environmental issues are at the forefront of everyone's mind, Miami-Dade County officials are working to ensure that the county stays on top of green initiatives that could contribute to a sustainable future.

Under the leadership of **Susanne Torriente**, director of Office of Sustainability, the county has "received worldwide recognition" for its environmental efforts, said Gabriole Van Bryce, executive director of Dream in Green, a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing and undertaking programs that promote energy conservation and efficiency. "The scientific world is watching Florida."

Ms. Torriente was recently recognized by the White House's Champions of Change program for her efforts to green up the county, a fact that Ms. Van Bryce attributes to the director's GreenPrint program, a countywide sustainability plan created to synchronize government and community goals.

The program includes 137 initiatives designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated the program will reduce emissions by 1.5 million metric tons over the next five years, with even greater reductions in the future.

"It's our plan for the future," Ms. Van Bryce said. "That's bigger than just the environment."

As part of the GreenPrint program, the Office of Sustainability has launched its own green business certification program. Under the program, businesses can conduct a self-audit via the county's website and will receive a score indicating how green they are, Ms. Torriente said. If scores meet certain measures, the group would be encouraged to apply for certification through the office.

Miami-Dade financed GreenPrint, and many other sustainability initiatives, through an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, funded by 2009's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Currently 13 projects are in the works over eight county departments.

According to Ms. Torriente, funds have been used to install a cool roof on the Homestead Library, 700 N. Homestead Blvd., to host energy savings workshops for county residents, to issue loans to local businesses for energy retrofits and to install solar panels on park buildings.

"We're meeting all of our milestones with the Department of Energy," Ms. Torriente said. "They're very pleased with us and what we've done with the grant."

But while Ms. Torriente has made great strides, she said that **Dan Kimball** deserves to be recognized for his environmental efforts as well.



Susanne Torriente helps county receive worldwide recognitions.



Nick Gunia leads Alterna in green buildings products distribution.

Mr. Kimball has worked with the National Park Service 27 years, the last seven as superintendent of Everglades & Dry Tortugas National Parks.

Before teaming up with the Everglades, Mr. Kimball worked as a special assistant to the park service deputy director in Washington and was chief of park service's water resources division for 10 years.

As superintendent, Mr. Kimball said he has worked to restore the park's imperiled ecosystem.

The group is constructing a bridge on Tamiami Trail that will allow natural water to flow into the park and is installing a new seepage control system outside of the park's main entrance. His team has created the country's largest "poll and troll" zone, limiting the use of internal combustion motors in the county, protecting Florida Bay's natural resources and improving recreational fishing conditions.

Over the past few years, Mr. Kimball's team has worked to increase their knowledge on climate change, "particularly in light of the park's vulnerability to sea-level rise as a result of its low elevation." As two-thirds of the park is less than one meter above sea level, Mr. Kimball is working to address climate control issues before they get out of hand.

"Restoring the park depends on understanding and supporting the park and its major role in not only providing a place for visitors to enjoy and recreate," Mr. Kimball said, "but also recognizing that in South Florida we are dependent on the Everglades for our drinking water."

According to Lee Cook, executive director of the US Green Business Council of South Florida, **Nick Gunia**, founder of the Alterna Corp. and Dream in Green, is also working to

THE BEST OF MIAMI 2011

TURNING GREEN

support Miami-Dade's sustainability efforts.

With distribution centers in Atlanta and Miami, Alterna is the leading green building products distribution company in the Southeast US and Caribbean. Its clients include Miami-Dade County's Water & Sewer Department, Starwood Hotels and the Carlisle Development Group, the sixth-largest housing developer in the nation.

A long-time environmentalist, Mr. Gunia said he got the idea to start Alterna while helping found the county's Dream in Green program. While speaking with building professionals, Mr. Gunia noticed that there seemed to be a shortage of green products throughout the area. Always forward-thinking, Mr. Gunia worked to fill that void.

Building professionals "exposed this vacuum in the marketplace that I saw the opportunity to fill," he said.

Mr. Gunia said the company has and a "phenomenal year" and plans to expand its reach. Right now the business spans nine states and offers items designed to conserve water and natural resources. Products include dual-flush toilets, high-efficiency faucets and plumbing systems, and recycled flooring, countertops and wall panels.

Mr. Kimball also plans to expand the Dream in Green program. Having chaired the organization since 2006, he said the group has applied for grants through the US Environmental Protection Agency. If approved, the money would support a new program designed to teach high school students about the link between the environment and human health.

According to Mr. Cook, "Alterna Corp. and Dream in Green are thriving under [Mr. Kimball's] direction."

Brett Bibeau, executive director of the Miami River Commission, said **Sandy Batchelor**, a governing member of the South Florida Water Management District and head of the Batchelor Foundation, should also be recognized for her "stewardship to environmental causes representing Miami-Dade County."

Ms. Batchelor was appointed in 2010 by Gov. Charlie Crist to the South Florida Water Management District, where she has been working to restore the Everglades, manage flood control efforts and analyze water quality and quantity. The group oversees 16 counties and 17 million residents across Florida.

The Batchelor Foundation supports museums and other cultural organizations and programs across South Florida. The foundations works with organizations that aim to improve the environment through research and educational programs focused on the conservation of natural resources.