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Miami Leaders Take a Break From Politics to Head to the Principal's Office

Hundreds of Miami-Dade County's business and civic leaders took a break from the electoral campaign last month to head to the principal's office, where they learned what it's like to be commander-in-chief of the county's schools.

More than 350 CEOs, judges, mayors, lawyers, bankers and military officers volunteered in the district's public schools on October 21, the same day of a rally for now President-elect Barack Obama.

They spent the morning touring Miami-Dade County's 340 schools, speaking with teachers and students and beginning what may become long-term relationships with schools in Florida's largest school district, which was recognized on October 14 as one of the nation's most improved school districts in 2008 by the Broad Prize for Urban Education. The largest education monetary award in the U.S. given to school districts, the prize was established by businessman and philanthropist Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good.



Andres de Corral addresses a news conference

"When times are turbulent, commitment is needed more than ever to get important things accomplished," said MD **Andres de Corral**, head of the northern Latin America region for Global Wealth Management's Miami International Complex. Mr. de Corral spent the day volunteering at Booker T. Washington Senior High School, Miami's second-oldest public school.



Eddy Bayardelle, right, accepts an award on Merrill Lynch's behalf from School Board Chairman Agustin Barrera

and Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of schools.

"Few jobs demand more than that of a principal, and few professionals give more of themselves than the women and men who head our schools," Mr. Carvalho said.

The Principal for a Day Program is organized by the New York-based nonprofit organization Pencil, which brings business leaders and principals together to build relationships, spark innovation and jointly transform public schools.

With support from Merrill Lynch and its

"My colleagues at Merrill Lynch and I have been firm in our commitment to our clients as they navigate today's changing economic climate," he said, "and as Principal Rhonda Williams showed me today, these difficult times have only served to strengthen the commitment of teachers and administrators to our students in this county."

Mr. de Corral kicked off the day at a news conference with Mayor Manny Diaz and later spoke at a celebratory lunch hosted by Jackie Nespral, a television anchor of the local NBC affiliate.


They were joined by Donna Shalala, president of the University of Miami and former U.S. Health and Human Services secretary; Agustin Barrera, chairman of the Miami-Dade County School Board; Barry Johnson, president and CEO of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce;

employee volunteers, the program has been expanded and strengthened. Merrill Lynch now supports the program in Atlanta; Chicago; Dallas; Jersey City and Newark, New Jersey; New Orleans; New York; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; San Diego and San Francisco. In Miami-Dade County this year, Merrill Lynch had 32 volunteers.

"The Principal for a Day program illustrates the success of teamwork and building long-term partnerships between the corporate sector and public schools," said MD **Eddy Bayardelle**, president of the Merrill Lynch Foundation. "Merrill Lynch employees have once again helped to prove that transforming public education and creating the next generation of leaders takes the commitment of all of us."



Andres de Corral, second from left, with Principal Rhonda Williams, Mayor Manny Diaz and School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho

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