

## Thankful...Grateful...Appreciative...Comforted...Satisfied...Refreshed...

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And that's just the beginning of what living in Miami Beach means to me...and a host of other happy South Floridians! Let's begin with why we came here. More important...why we stayed!

Our families journeyed from various cities and countries both big and small. Everyone was searching for warm sunny weather, miles and miles of glorious beachfront, and all manner of opportunities to advance professionally, financially...and even personally. Fresh starts on shiny new lives. A constant, continuing migration from the North, South, East and West transplanted thousands to our little paradise set on the southern waters of the Atlantic Ocean. All new arrivals had stories detailing exactly what brought them here. You certainly know your story...and even the stories of many others.

But why did so many make Miami Beach their permanent home? What's kept them here? After all, the past 70 years have produced monumental changes on Miami Beach. What started as a small, sleepy village grew to be one of the Entertainment Capitals of the World featuring fun- and sun-filled activities for young and old. Though as years passed...its' glamorous, glittery luster became less so. But now, Miami Beach has again become one of the hottest vacation destinations in the world as well as an exciting place to live and prosper all year round! We have 15 distinct neighborhoods each having their own points of interests, 8 great public schools, many private schools, a college campus on Lincoln Road, culinary cuisines that tantalize your palate with tastes from around the world, and outdoor activities that are a way of life in Miami Beach with the city parks playing a significant role in providing a broad range of recreation facilities to the public. From beach parks with boardwalks to the renowned Ronald W. Shane Watersports Center, Miami Beach residents and visitors alike can enjoy the many resources offered on Miami Beach.

This season of celebration and giving thanks is the perfect time to reflect on and truly appreciate all the unique, multi-cultural venues and unending stream of events available to us every year, every month, every week...and nearly every day, many of which have come through grants available through the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority (MBVCA).

Let's look at some of them here that have been incubated, nourished and have grown because of the MBVCA and that will be showcased within the next 3 months ... You can feel the anticipation in the air.

- Art Basel Miami Beach, a contemporary art exhibition, is held each December and is now celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Year. This is a sister event to Art Basel in Switzerland. The Miami Beach exhibition has been held annually since 2002, as a city-wide event. Along with promoting adjoining fairs and associated events, organizers of Art Basel Miami Beach boast that it has eclipsed the original Art Basel in size and popularity, if not importance.
- ING Miami Marathon and Half Marathon and Tropical 5K - Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be famous? Find out this coming January (2012) at the 10th annual ING Miami Marathon and Half Marathon and Tropical 5K where you will find 22,000 star runners in one of the fastest growing marathons in the country. Miami Beach's palm tree lined boulevards and balmy ocean breeze are the perfect backdrop for this winter race. It is amazing that the runners are able to concentrate on the race with all of the visual distractions encountered along the way.
- The Discover Orange Bowl is an annual American college football bowl game played at Sun Life Stadium and has been played annually since January 1, 1935.

- The South Beach Wine and Food Festival, now going into its 11<sup>th</sup> year, is a national, star-studded, four-day destination event showcasing the talents of the world's most renowned wine and spirits producers, chefs and culinary personalities. The festival benefits FIU's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management Teaching Restaurant that has raised more than \$12 million to date for the School and has grown from 7,000 guests attending a series of dinners, seminars, a Grand Tasting Village and live Auction to over 50,000 guests to this four-day event becoming one of the largest and most well-known festivals of its kind in the country. It has garnered an unprecedented amount of media coverage, earning more than 1 billion media impressions through its integrated marketing and public relations plan.
- The Customer and You Leadership Program which runs throughout the year bridges the gap between our service industry and the patrons (both local and tourist) they serve bringing a higher degree of service and customer satisfaction. No wonder people are now expressing how "friendly" Miami Beach is and how eager they are to return.
- And the events continue throughout the year with "happenings" such as The South Beach Comedy Festival, many local and foreign Film Festivals, the multi-media art festival known as Sleepless Night Miami Beach, The Miami International Salsa Congress, The Winter and White Parties, other marathons/triathlons, Beach Polo, to name a few, all in part, supported by the MBVCA.

So the next time you say to yourself, what is there to do on Miami Beach, turn on your computer and link to the MBVCA site to see what wonderful events are happening throughout our exciting City. But don't just stop there. Become a tourist in your own City and enjoy all the culture and excitement that Miami Beach has to offer from the Art Deco District, to the New World Symphony under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas, which allows visitors not only to enjoy the performances from within, but also to experience select events throughout the season at the half-acre outdoor SoundScape through the use of visual and audio technology on a 7,000-square foot projection wall, to the Miami City Ballet, the Miami Beach Bass Museum of Art, The Holocaust Memorial and a wonderful stroll down Ocean Drive and Lincoln Road – nationally known spots for outdoor dining, bicycling, rollerblading and shopping featuring unique shops and galleries of well-known designers, artists and photographers.

Where else but Miami Beach can you find all this ..... and more??

With gratitude for all that Miami Beach gives me and mine, the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority and I wish you and yours a wonderfully joyous, healthy, peaceful and happy holiday season and new year filled with all of life's greatest treasures.