



# CRA AT FORTY

*What CRA Means to Me:*

## Helping Our Girls Find Their Voice

Sherry Thompson Giordano  
*PACE Center for Girls Miami*

PACE Center for Girls Miami provides girls and young women, ages 11 to 17, an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy. The PACE Miami intervention and prevention program assists girls and young women in gaining the skills and knowledge they need to stay out of the state's juvenile justice system, become contributing students to the county's educational system and lead healthy, productive and fulfilling lives. The PACE program is statewide and there are nineteen centers throughout the state of Florida. PACE values all girls and young women, believing each one deserves an opportunity to find her voice, achieve her potential and celebrate a life defined by responsibility, dignity, serenity and grace. The PACE Miami Center is located in a high-risk neighborhood and we work with "at promise" Girls from the poorest neighborhoods in Miami-Dade County. We see the impact of poverty every day with our Girls and their families, including violence, incarceration, physical abuse, drug abuse, sexual exploitation and dropping out of school.

The holistic, strength-based and asset-building PACE program model addresses the needs of girls and has garnered recognition nationally as one of the most effective programs in the country for keeping girls from entering the juvenile justice system and for improving their academic standings. One year after transitioning from PACE, 94 percent of our Girls maintain their higher academic status, 92 percent have no involvement with the juvenile justice system and 88 percent have had no involvement with the juvenile justice system after five years!

As PACE Miami is a new nonprofit in the community, we immediately knew that for us to achieve the outcomes we desire, it was important to partner with financial institutions who have the same drive to better our community and to help break the multi-generational cycle of poverty. PACE Miami wanted true partners - those who not only want to support PACE through funding but also through volunteer support for our program.

The partnerships we have been able to forge because of CRA have been amazing. We have regular financial literacy workshops for our PACE Girls and shortly will offer similar workshops to our Girls' parents and families. Our bank partners are eager to share their stories with our Girls. They discuss job opportunities and future careers that our

Girls can easily pursue through commitment, dedication and know-how. Our partners are providing this know-how and our Girls are gaining the confidence to discover their full potential.

Our CRA partners act as “professional mentors” for our Girls. The funding we have received goes to the sustainability of our holistic program focused on educational and behavioral improvement. These partnerships have also given PACE Miami great visibility and presence within our community. This is a priceless gift and an added benefit for our organization and would not have happened in such a timely manner without CRA relationships – all of this has happened in just one year of working with our CRA partners. We intend to expand our partnerships to other financial organizations within Miami-Dade county and grow our CRA outreach – for the betterment of our Girls, their families and our community.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**SHERRY THOMPSON GIORDANO** is a results-oriented senior executive with demonstrated experience in entrepreneurial, corporate global companies and nonprofit organizations. She has a unique combination of “nonprofit expertise and passion” grounded in 30 years of proven corporate experience in the technology industry. She is honored to have been named a recipient of the National Academy Foundation Advisory Board Champion award in July 2011 and the recipient of the South Florida Digital Alliance’s “Universal Access Award” in 2012. In 2013, Sherry joined PACE Center for Girls Miami as the Executive Director. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Business from Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri and attended Oxford University in England and completed coursework in Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

This article first appeared in **CRA at 40: Views on the Present and Future of Community Reinvestment**, published by findCRA in November 2017. The book was created in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Community Reinvestment Act. It tells the stories of community development, from the perspective of those working in our communities who bring their knowledge and passion to bear every day in confronting the most critical problems facing communities in need. The book is about real-world experiences told in plain language by those who live them to provide a lens for readers to see CRA at work, ideas for its future and most importantly, what it means in people’s lives. To access the full text or order copies of the book, please visit [www.findCRA.com/CRAat40](http://www.findCRA.com/CRAat40).