

**Spirit of Goodwill Band:
U.S. Conference of Mayors
Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts**

June 23, 2008

Dear Friends,

For those that were unable to attend the Spirit of Goodwill Band's exciting performance at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I have taken the liberty of composing a 'play-by-play' account of the evening's event.

Mayors of about 440 cities and their families – together with a number of local guests – attended the Spirit of Goodwill Band performance on Sunday, June 22, 2008 at the Center for the Performing Arts. Guests began to arrive at 7:00 p.m. and were welcomed by a beautifully presented reception. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails were served in the front lobby, while background music played by two violinists. Several TV crews interviewed a few of the Mayors.

The band arrived at about 4:00 p.m. and was provided a large 'green room' to rest, practice, eat and unwind before the event. The mother of one of the production crew is a makeup artist, and she volunteered her services. The band members got such a kick out of having their hair and makeup done that they are still talking about it.

At 7:40 p.m. - the band took its place on the stage. As they walked onto the stage, Juan (mentally challenged) was obviously nervous, and he asked Javier Peña, the Band Director, to "Please, pray for me." The band was positioned with three keyboards on the left. Vocalists were on the right. The brass section was in front, and percussion section was in back. My wife Teresa, Bridget Pallango, Lourdes Little and I were the only Goodwill staff inside the theater. We sat right in the center of the mezzanine and next to one of the cameras that recorded the event. It was a perfect vantage point to see the band very clearly – as well as the audience right below. High above the stage and above the band, a screen displayed "Spirit of Goodwill Band" and individual photos of the band members.

The stage curtains were bright and shiny red silk that were adorned with black silhouettes. During the past month, our Apparel Manufacturing Division created new, blue

guayaberas for the band members to wear. They all looked very handsome and were quite an imposing group on stage.

At 7:50 p.m. – the doors of the theater opened, and the audience entered. The Mayors and their guests were seated on the main floor. Other guests occupied the three mezzanines and balconies. Small groups immediately gathered in the aisles for small talk. TV cameras hunted for anyone they could get to interview, while a large number of camera flashes constantly went off. Meanwhile, the band stood silently in their positions on the stage. They looked like statues. I have never seen them stand still for so long!

At 7:58 p.m. – an announcement was made over the sound system for the audience to take their seats. A moment later another voice said "Good Evening - I am Javier Peña, Band Director. This will be a historic performance for the Spirit of Goodwill Band. This band is made up of people with severe disabilities – most of them mentally challenged. We have no knowledge of the existence of a similar band in the United States - so sit back and enjoy the music. We will show you what people with disabilities can do when given an opportunity to develop their human potential." The room became so quiet that you could hear a pin drop.

The band's opening song was '*For Once In My Life*' by Stevie Wonder. The sound system at the Performing Arts Center is state-of-the-art. It did an incredible job of calibrating every instrument with the right balance. Javier has provided incredible training. Especially in the keyboard section, you could clearly hear Christian (Autism and Blind) play the lead part that Javier used to play. Godwin (Autism) and Anthony (Mentally Challenged) played the background keyboards. Every day, the voice of Terry (Blind) sounds more like Stevie Wonder – but Terry is better to me. As a tribute to Javier's work and perseverance, the vocalists sang in perfect harmony – they have never sounded better.

As the song slowed toward the end, I couldn't help but wonder what the impression of the quiet and almost motionless audience was – their tranquility was only periodically interrupted by quiet camera flashes. The song ended. Suddenly, the entire audience stood with roaring applause and cheers! My wife and I have season tickets to all of the operas at the Performing Arts Center. In addition, we have seen a fairly large number of symphonic performances and Broadway shows. We have noticed that a standing ovation to recognize a great performance usually starts with several small groups in the audience. Then, the rest of the people gradually follow until the entire audience is standing. But, this performance was different from any that we have ever seen. The people in the audience looked like hundreds of 'jacks-in-the-boxes.' As a perfectly synchronized group, they very loudly ejected from their seats – trying to add to their roaring applause any additional noise that they could. The Goodwill staff around us and I discreetly dried our misty eyes.

Javier later explained that "When band members saw themselves in front of such a large audience, they all felt butterflies in their stomachs. But, the audience's ovation came as a powerful force of energy that gave band members a jolt of adrenaline and confidence. Right then, he knew that the band could handle anything."

Right after the first song, a one-minute video of Melissa (Down Syndrome) was shown that clearly drove home the point of Goodwill's mission and the band. The second song was '*I Feel Good*' by James Brown. At that point, the majority of the people were moving lively to the music in the seats. At the end of the song, there was another roaring round of applause. Then, a video of Godwin (Autism) was shown – the video also featured Godwin's non-disabled, twin brother and other family members that have struggled for years to help Godwin. Then, Melissa and Godwin were introduced to the audience and received the same roaring ovation.

The band's final song was the 'Miami Medley' - it is comprised of two very popular Latin songs that Javier has brilliantly combined. They are the '*Conga*' by Gloria Estefan and '*Oye Como Va*' by Tito Puente. The medley thrust forward the full power of the entire band - the brass section, battery of drums and the bongos achieved a rhythm and a beat on par with any professional Latin band. By then, the entire audience was either clapping to the rhythm of the band or vigorously dancing in their seats.

By the end of the song, the audience was fully energized and broke into a loud roar of applause and whistles. They clamored "more, more, and more." Then, the unprecedented happened. For weeks, Lourdes and Javier had been disappointed about having to comply with strict adherence to the time and schedule of only three songs. Well, the band received permission for an encore. They performed a fourth song - a perfectly executed '*Tutti Frutti*' that took many in the audience back to their teenage days.

The applause was endless. The lights on the stage had to be lowered to allow the band to exit. Next, a video, entitled 'Mayor Manny Diaz and Emilio Estefan's Visit to Goodwill Industries,' was played. It showed both of them arriving and touring Goodwill's plant. Finally, when they got to the band room, they sat down and quietly listened to the first song by the band. The next song had a Latin beat. Emilio could not resist joining the band's percussion section! Seeing Emilio having such fun – probably with envy - the Mayor was dying to also be a part of the group. He took off his coat and joined Emilio, playing and dancing with Melissa!

When the video ended, Mayor Diaz was at the podium next to the Mayor of Trenton, New Jersey, the current President of the Conference of Mayors, who spoke with very high emotion about the performance that he has just witnessed. Also choked up with emotion, Mayor Diaz struggled to start speaking. His remarks are too long for this document. To summarize, he spoke about Goodwill's work and its great contribution to the City of Miami. He explained Goodwill's program in detail and said how much the band personally means to him. He also told the audience that "There are about twenty million severely disabled individuals living in our cities, and about 63% of them are unemployed." To my surprise, he then called upon me to identify myself in the audience – so I could be recognized. The Mayor spoke for six minutes, and most of the time, it was about Goodwill. It was all priceless.

Mayor Diaz ended his remarks and said "Now please join me for dinner." The red curtains behind the stage went up, displaying a very large and very elegant dining room that was ready to accommo-

date the entire audience for dinner. A Latin band played background music. The entire event was designed to make a great impression on the guests and create a sensation among them. The room, along with The performance of Spirit of Goodwill Band , accomplished that and greatly added to the emotion of the night. The magnitude of the audience's response is still growing. Since Sunday, we have received reports of many people in tears and truly moved by the band. I have never witnessed any event where a more overt display of emotion was evident than at the theatre on Sunday night.

The reaction to the band's performance was as euphoric as the applause that they received. Many of the Mayors complimented the performance as "The best that they have seen at a Mayors' Conference." Some Mayors asked for information on how to start a band in their cities. But, some of the most significant accolades came from the professionals themselves. The Manager of the Performing Arts Center remarked to Javier "The band sounded better than many of the professional groups that I have worked with in the past." Peter J. Yianilos, President of the company that recorded the event, a lifelong musician, who has recorded stars like Luciano Pavarotti, Rolling Stones, Bee Gees, London Symphony Orchestra and many other stars, qualified the band's performance as an "eye-opener and magical'. He went on to say, "The performers in the Goodwill Band, in addition to communicating so compellingly as artists, are each and collectively shining examples of the magic of music. I was deeply moved by their total command of the huge crowd and the sense of personal accomplishment. It was the genuine deal and completely belied the physical obstacles which play such a real part in each players daily life." Even the stage workers, who have seen many performances, were moved. They congratulated and gave a very warm greeting to the band. Laura Parodi, a Goodwill senior counselor, overheard a conversation between two of Arturo Sandoval's professional musicians. They commented "Did you hear that? They were great. It would cost you good money to hear a band play as good as they did."

As soon as the performance ended, a tearful Senior Manager of Public Affairs for Wal-Mart congratulated Javier. Later, she explained to Rodney Barreto, who was head of the Host Committee for the event, that she wanted to fly the entire band to Wal-Mart's headquarters in Arkansas for a performance. After that, the band will not have to worry anymore about fundraising.

The entire evening was planned as a five-hour event - starting with a cocktail reception and followed by three songs by our band and remarks by the outgoing and incoming Presidents of the Mayors' Conference. The last and main part of the event was planned to be the dinner with a performance by Arturo Sandoval and his band. All of the Mayors, guests, staff and entertainers truly understood by the audience's reaction that the performance of Spirit of Goodwill Band was among one of the highlights of the evening.

Silvia Riorda, Goodwill's Vocational Services Manager, described the band members as they left the stage. "They walked very quietly with discipline – the many hours of behavior modification and training paid off. However, they knew by the reaction of the audience that they had done a great job. As soon as they entered the 'green room' – they started screaming with joy, hugging each other and congratulating themselves. Patrick McCoy started jumping as high as he could. The band members were screaming 'We did it. We did it!' This jubilation went on and on. Juan Pulgarin called

his mother on his cell phone. As soon as she answered, he screamed 'Mother, we did good. We did good!' Without waiting for his Mother's response, he handed the telephone to a counselor."

On Monday, when I arrived at Goodwill, all of the band members wanted to thank me and wanted to hear from me how good they did.

Javier, the musical director, went home and said "Thank God" – he went to bed before midnight and did not wake up until 1 pm. the next day. He said "I have never in my life slept like that."

Note of Appreciation

The performance would never have been possible without the generosity, support and hard work of many people. Our heartfelt thanks goes to:

Mayor Manny Diaz, Rodney Barreto, Emilio Estefan and the City of Miami's staff for making us a part of their event and allowing us to film it for our documentary.

We appreciate the Goodwill Board of Directors, Trustees and our other generous contributors for their generous financial support of the band.

We appreciate Javier Peña for his dedication and passion in training and developing the band.

We appreciate Omar Rodriguez and Victor Pegorari for their support in training and assistance with band performances.

We appreciate Lourdes Little, who took responsibility for fundraising for the band, coordinating with the Mayor's Office, Performing Arts Center staff, film crews and addressing an endless number of details that were needed to ensure the success of the event.

We appreciate the entire film crew for their commitment and dedication to the making of the documentary, for believing in the story of the band and for signing on to do this project, "for love, not money."

We appreciate the 30 members of Goodwill staff that are counselors, teachers, technicians and other staff - they support the band performances and work long hours before and after each performance to ensure that the band performances are a success.

We appreciate all Goodwill staff that truly love and support the band.

Sincerely,



Dennis Pastrana
President & CEO