

Jayne Harris Abess

Jayne Harris Abess' dedication to the well-being of our community encompasses two invaluable aspects of giving: philanthropy and hands-on hard work. Her energy, creativity and leadership not only affect positive change, but also inspire others to assume active roles - particularly within the non-profit fields of health and human services.

Currently, Jayne chairs the United Way of Miami-Dade board, a two-year term beginning July 1, 2011. She is the former co-chair of United Way's Community Investments Committee, and has been actively involved in early childhood education advocacy both locally and nationally through United Way Women's Leadership.

Along with her husband Leonard, Jayne joined United Way's Tocqueville Society Million Dollar Roundtable in 1995. In 2001, they received the prestigious Tocqueville Award for Outstanding Philanthropy, United Way's highest honor, which celebrates service and philanthropy. Jayne has also received United Way's Dorothy Shula Award for Volunteerism.

Jayne is also chair emeritus of Goodwill Industries of South Florida, board member of Parsons the New School for Design in New York City, board member of Mount Sinai Medical Center Foundation, and past president of the Junior League of Miami.

Among her many leadership roles, Jayne has served on the boards of Miami Country Day School; the Bass Museum; the board and the executive committee of Ransom Everglades School; a trustee of the Peddie School in Hightstown, New Jersey; the Youth Education and Sports Foundation; the Miami Child Watch Coalition/Children's Defense Fund; the Concert Association of Greater Miami; the Miami-Dade Partners for Safe Neighborhoods; the Bertha Abess Children's Center; and the Solid Waste Management Task Force.

Jayne is a founder of Mount Sinai Medical Center, where the Abess family founded the Abess Diagnostic Center and the Abess Family Neonatal Intensive Care Center.

As devoted environmentalists, she and her husband endowed the Leonard and Jayne Abess Center for Ecosystem Science and Policy (CESP) at the University of Miami. The Center fosters interdisciplinary approaches to environmental management and decision-making on a global level. They also founded the Abess Center for Environmental Studies (ACES) at Miami Country Day School, the Abess Greenhouse at the Peddie School, and the Abess Floating Research Station in the Brazilian Amazon.

Together, they are recipients of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's 2007 Sand in My Shoes Award and the Health Foundation of South Florida's Concern Award for their commitment to issues concerning health and human services. They were also honored as Outstanding Philanthropists of the Year by the National Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Among Jayne's many other honors, she is the recipient of the Junior League's Rebecca Herndon Bush Award for outstanding community service; has been honored by the American Cancer Society; was named a "Miami-Dade Superstar;" and received the Woman of Achievement award from the March of Dimes and the AT&T Community Service Award from the American Red Cross. In 2010, she received the Silver Medallion Award from the Miami Coalition of Christians and Jews for her service to humanity.

Jayne is a partner in thinkLAB Ventures, past vice president of Community Relations for City National Bank of Florida and of Harris Company/South, Inc., an advertising and marketing firm. She attended Bennington College and Florida International University, receiving a bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology, and is a graduate of Leadership Miami.