

Virtual All Charities Story Leads to Job Well Done at Pumpkin Cay



by Yurianna Mikolay, Executive Director Ocean Reef Community Foundation

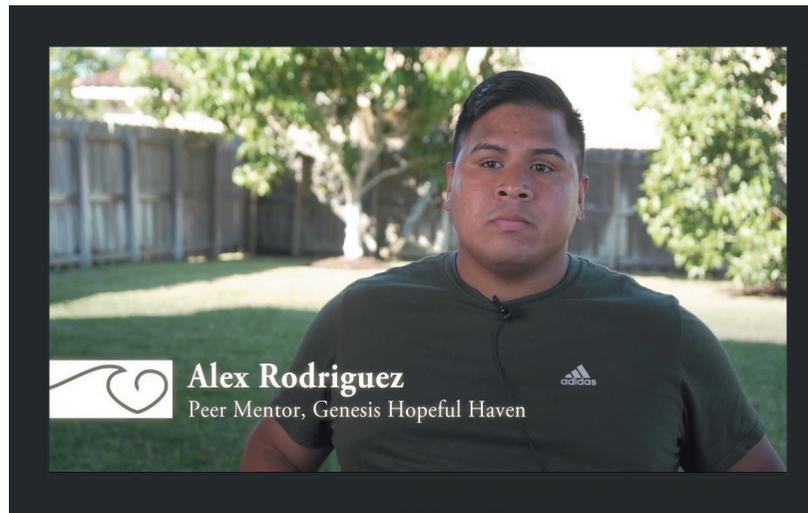
A huge thank you to everyone who watched and participated in the 2021 Virtual All Charities Auction presentation last month! As always, many good things will happen thanks to the funds it raised, but this year we had some unexpected benefits for a young entrepreneur featured in the film and one Ocean Reef neighborhood. If I do say so myself, it's a great story!

According to Pumpkin Cay Condo Association #8 President **Dan Cohen** they recently finished a seawall project and needed power-washing bids to freshen up the driveways and balconies after the construction when, "Auction night came along and we watched Alex's story and said let's reach out and see if he has the capability."

Alex's Story

Alex Rodriguez was featured in a story about the Ocean Reef Community Foundation's work through Genesis Hopeful Haven (GHH), a nonprofit which helps local foster youth as they age out of the system and are suddenly out on their own at age 18. As GHH Executive Director Fritzie Saintoiry says in the clip, 61 percent of foster care alumni will be in prison by their 19th birthday, half will drop out of high school, 48 percent will end up homeless and only two percent will graduate college.

But at 22, Alex has defied all odds and is thriving thanks to GHH and his own hard work, determination, and commitment to serving others. Today he is



Alex Rodriguez, featured in the 2021 Virtual All Charities Auction presentation.

a GHH House Peer Mentor giving back through the program that helped him. He recently graduated from the College of the Florida Keys Police Academy and is starting his first job as a police officer within the month. On top of going through the academy while working towards his college degree, Alex was also able to start a power-washing business called **Blue Prestige** through a life skills program sponsored by the Foundation. He is using the business to train, employ, mentor, and ultimately help provide work experience and financial independence to mentees. Alex intends to continue leading the business as part of the GHH program.

Today Blue Prestige is doing well, typically serving about 15 individual clients a week, but as Alex puts it, "This was our first big job and I am very appreciative that Dan gave us the opportunity and trusted us."

Mentoring Moves

Cohen took the opportunity to provide Alex some mentoring himself on how to build and scale a business, to make sure that Blue Prestige met all of ORCA's requirements to work in the community and to connect Alex with the Pumpkin Cay insurance agent to help him select a policy that fit the size and needs of his business. Cohen also gave Alex some guidance on the bidding process, making clear that he should not over or under price himself (the Association had been "a bit stunned at the 'Ocean Reef' pricing" reflected

in some of the competing bids). On his own, Alex consulted with other professionals in Key Largo to make sure he had a fair, competitive bid and was ultimately awarded the job.

Cohen advised Alex that "doing a really good job is your best advertisement" and Alex took it to heart, saying, "Our main goal is to get the job done right and make the residents happy." Noting that Alex turned out to be great at troubleshooting and dealing with Members, Cohen reports the Association membership is enjoying seeing the true color of the driveway stones after being pressure washed and they are indeed happy.

When I ask him how Alex did when the job was wrapping up, Cohen said, "He gets it. He is building his business the right way and he is helping young people with similar challenges. They are working extremely hard and doing a fabulous job."

On Top of the Mountain

After Alex and his mentee had



Shown here on the job in the Pumpkin Cay neighborhood, Alex Rodriguez (right) has been training his mentee Marshall (left) to be his "right hand man" in his pressure-washing business Blue Prestige and says, "He's doing great, I am proud of him. He knows everything I know. I am a perfectionist, and that's what he is now."

completed the 50-hour job and all six condo buildings on schedule, he said, "I am excited that we got it done. The residents gave us great feedback. After this week, I feel like I climbed a mountain and I am on top! I know how to write a proposal now, and if we are asked to do another job like this we will be ready."

What a testament to the life-changing impact of mentoring! I was very touched by the effort put into giving Alex and his business this opportunity. Sure, I'll admit it, I was hoping someone would see the film and hire Blue Prestige, but what happened was so much more than that. When I thanked Mr. Cohen he simply replied, "That's the Ocean Reef way."

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2021 BAG ROOM OPEN

Great 8 Weekend

FRIDAY, MARCH 26 • 1 PM Ben Claus vs Zach Haynes	SATURDAY, MARCH 27 Evan Waldron vs Steve Taraska
Dan Hipp vs David Sandberg	Jacob Smith vs Griff Jayne