



CHAMPION IN LIFE

A New Inning for the Miami Marlins Foundation

BY LAUREN RIGAU

It's a new inning for the Miami Marlins Foundation, relaunched this summer with a 2.0 vision of making a positive impact.

The Miami Marlins Foundation is the official charity of the Miami Marlins baseball team, purchased in 2017 by a group that includes former baseball star Derek Jeter. Through various platforms, including the recent Impact Week, it's empowering young people in South Florida by creating opportunities for them to stay active, achieve academic success, and build leadership skills. The newly branded mission is quite simple, to provide the tools and support for children to succeed. Through wellness and empowerment initiatives as well as baseball, the Foundation is helping pave social and emotional intelligence for children through character development, and instilling a sense of teamwork that benefits the community.



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In the dugout is the new Executive Director, Raquel “Rocky” Egusquiza, a proud Miami native. Her journey to this role included leadership positions at AT&T, Ford, AARP and NBCU Telemundo creating positive change. “My past experiences have allowed me to merge marketing, corporate social responsibility, philanthropy, government affairs, and fundraising into my current role of rebuilding the Miami Marlins Foundation in my hometown,” said Rocky.

According to Jeter, her new boss and the Marlins’ CEO, “Rocky is a well-known figure in South Florida for her leadership, extensive

outreach, and community involvement. She has a proven track record of creating and implementing programs that have had a meaningful impact on the very community where she was raised. Her expertise in the local not-for-profit sector, combined with her inherent love of the game and experience gained from working with some of the nation’s top brands, continues to elevate the Miami Marlins Foundation’s efforts as we continue to re-engage our partners and establish extensive roots in the South Florida community.”

Rocky agrees: “There is nothing more rewarding than the opportunity to make an

impact in your hometown. Knowing that our work at the Marlins is helping Hispanic and African-American youth in South Florida eliminate wellness barriers and assist them in achieving academic success is an honor.”

Born of Cuban parents, Rocky shares how growing up in a household and in a community fueled by the success of immigrants gave her, “the courage and confidence to know that with hard work, education, and perseverance, I could achieve anything.” As a child, Rocky would listen to baseball games sitting on her grandfather’s lap, his passion infectious as he screamed at the radio box. She still remembers the sensation of utter joy she felt attending games with him. Now she revels in sharing that same love of the game with her two-year-old son Julian.

Rocky’s mother Ada, the first in her family to attend college in the U.S., chose to work as a teacher in underserved communities, teaching her the value of how giving back holds the power to pursue one’s dreams. Her father, Julio, instilled an incurable entrepreneurial spirit by making sure she grew up proud of her Latina roots, “Being Latina for me has come with the passion to lead without fear, work with purpose, embrace new

possibilities, all the while being grateful for my heritage and never forgetting where I came from,” Rocky said.

The debut of the relaunched Miami Marlins Foundation culminated with Impact Week, featuring seven events in seven days across South Florida. There were three focus areas: Wellness, Empowerment, and Youth Baseball and Softball. This ambitious initiative held August 23-29 brought attention to the difference Marlins executives, players and partners are collectively making in the community.

First up was a Play Ball Event for more than 300 students at Poinciana Park Elementary. Next came a Philanthropy Fun Day at Feeding South Florida Broward, where volunteers gathered to sort food for more than 706,000 families and individuals in South Florida facing food insecurity, and held a mobile food distribution as part of the Home Plate Meals Program at Slam Miami Charter School. Marlins players and staff also distributed school supplies in partnership with the Kiwanis of Little Havana Foundation to various schools during the week. The final event of Impact Week was at Roger Dean Chevrolet Stadium, where Marlins prospects provided an

instructional clinic for the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Beach and Martin County.

Looking ahead to 2020, Jeter explains how the Foundation will be continuing its efforts to re-engage the community. “We said from Day One, we want to get back out here in the community. We know this organization has historically done a lot in the community. We want to have an impact in our own way. For us, we feel when you have this platform to give back, you should do so in a positive manner. We just want to be good neighbors. Like I’ve said time and time again, this is the community’s baseball team. This is their organization, and we want them to feel a part of it.”

Rocky can be proud of what the Foundation has accomplished so far, but she remains committed to growing the positive impact it can have on young people, including her son Julian, who regularly attends Marlins games with his dad, Francisco Barranco.

“We want to look at the depth and type of impact. Are we simply making a connection or improving outcomes and leading to transformation? As we think through our program areas of wellness and empowerment, we know that we can inspire our youth, build



leadership skills, promote play and healthy habits through youth baseball and softball,” she said. “We also know that not every child will be a baseball player, but what they learn in baseball will make them a champion in life.”