

A community call to action for Morningside K-8 Academy



It seems each week a groovy eatery opens here in our Biscayne Corridor, the new culinary epicenter of Miami's sensual renaissance. Recent additions I've enjoyed include Dr. Smood (Wynwood), Firito Taco (Shorecrest), Philly Grub (Little Haiti), and Michelle Bernstein's renovated Cena by Michy (MiMo District). A healthy pipeline of new spots await our growing appetites.

My wife and I have done our best to instill a sense of gustatory adventure in our kids. What's more glorious than watching a cheeky kindergartener devour a meal cooked with love that's not chicken nuggets? Our six-year-old will gorge on sushi rolls all night. Our eight-year-old's favorite snack? Stinky gorgonzola and olives.

We moved here a few years ago from San Francisco, a place where eating is religion. As equal opportunity foodies, we get as thrilled about grimy dive tacos as truffle-drenched haute cuisine. Which is why I'm excited about the upcoming Taste of Morningside on April 23 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., on the grounds of Morningside K-8 Academy in the historic MiMo District.

Bring your kids to experience a host of offerings from neighborhood restaurants, including Jugo Fresh, Soyka, Andiamo, Dogma, Beacon Chocolates, Eastside Pizza, Cheeseburger Baby, Flavorish, Philly Grub, Via Verde, F27 Nitrogen Ice Cream, and more. Drinks provided by Perrier. Live music and games make this a perfect family outing.

Eat Well, Do Good

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor
April 2016

My wife and I both attended public school, and I expected to give our kids the same integrated, meritocratic education. But a few years back, when it came time to enroll our kids in our local public school, we reluctantly balked. After much consideration, and several tours and meetings with the former principal, we simply did not believe the school offered the same educational environment found in some of the local private schools. That school was Morningside K-8. One could argue I'm part of the problem. I get that. And I want to help solve it because Morningside K-8 has worked hard since then to become a great school.

A strong school anchors a community. It raises home values, helps businesses thrive, and lowers crime. I believe the public school system is the glue that holds America together, the great equalizer and staging ground for the American Dream, where kids who apply themselves can go as far as they dare. Unfortunately, we have underfunded many of our schools, including Morningside K-8. I was told recently that the basketball team had to walk a mile to a game because the school lacked funds for a bus.

In the midst of the real estate juggernaut that is the Upper Eastside, most of Morningside K-8's students qualify for free lunch -- a clear indicator of the school's socioeconomic challenges. White flight has been rampant. I'm a case in point. Shame on us, as a city and a country, for allowing this fundamental systemic failure.

Still, for a budget-strapped school, Morningside has much to be proud of. It's a language magnet, offering Spanish, French, and Creole. "Our gifted classes are strong, and my sons' teachers have always been very approachable and truly engaged," said one very involved mother with pride.

A new principal has hit the ground running with advances in technology and programming. Exciting after-school programs and clubs offer organic gardening, sports teams, an art club, youth ballet, and more.

This column is not the forum to tackle America's public school shortcomings. But it is a perfect place to ask you to help one of your own, because it takes a village. And if not us, who?

If we can lift each of our local public schools, one by one, our lives in South Florida will continue to improve, as happy, well-adjusted children emerge to become our future leaders and

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neighbors.

Each burger and chocolate you savor will help fund teachers' salaries, art and music programs, and better food choices for your only public elementary school in the Upper Eastside. Join the neighborhood associations of Morningside, Belle Meade, and the MiMo Biscayne Association to support a most valiant cause.

As a proud Miami native and public school graduate, I've lived with the benefits of a healthy public school environment. Let's help one of our own worthy institutions reach its potential and find its seat at the table of great schools in the years ahead.

Taste of Morningside, Saturday, April 23, 3:00-6:00 p.m., 6620 NE 5th Ave., Miami 33138. Tickets \$15 adults, \$5 kids to sample everything. Contact Morningsidek8pta@gmail.com, www.morningsidek8.com.

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