

DAVID LAWRENCE JR.

David Lawrence Jr. retired in 1999 as publisher of The Miami Herald to work in the area of early childhood development and readiness. He is president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and “University Scholar for Early Childhood Development and Readiness” at the University of Florida. He leads The Children’s Movement of Florida, building an enduring, sustainable movement to make all children the state’s No. 1 priority in investment and decision-making. He is a member of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet and twice chaired the Florida Partnership for School Readiness. In 2002 he led the campaign for The Children’s Trust, a dedicated source of early intervention and prevention funding for children in Miami-Dade – with an 85% reaffirmation in 2008. He is the “founding chair.” He serves on the boards of the Foundation for Child Development in New York and the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In 2002-3 he chaired the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Protection, and in 2011 he chaired a similar panel for the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families. In 2002, he was a key figure in passing a statewide constitutional amendment to provide pre-K for all 4 year olds. He is a board member and former chair of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe. The David Lawrence Jr. K-8 Public School opened in 2006. An endowed chair in early childhood studies is established in his name at the University of Florida College of Education.

Before coming to Miami in 1989, he was publisher and executive editor of the Detroit Free Press. Previously he was editor of the Charlotte Observer, and earlier in reporting and editing positions at four newspapers. (During his tenure as Miami Herald publisher, the paper won five Pulitzer Prizes.)

He is a graduate of the University of Florida and named "Outstanding Journalism Graduate" and subsequently from the Advanced Management program at the Harvard Business School. In 1988, he was honored with Knight-Ridder's top award, the John S. Knight Gold Medal. His 12 honorary doctorates include one from his alma mater, the University of Florida. His national honors include the Ida B. Wells Award "for exemplary leadership in providing minorities employment opportunities" and the National Association of Minority Media Executives award for "lifetime achievement in diversity." His writing awards include the First Amendment Award from the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Inter American Press Association Commentary Award. He chaired the national Task Force on Minorities in the Newspaper Business, was the 1991-92 president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the 1995-96 president of the Inter American Press Association. He was inducted into the Florida Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2010.

He has served the Miami Art Museum, United Way and the New World School of the Arts as chair, and is a life trustee of the University of Florida Foundation and a member of the national board of the Everglades Foundation. He was the local convening co-chair of the 1994 Summit of the Americas. And he co-founded a non-profit vocational-technical school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

He and Roberta, a master’s graduate in social work from Barry, live in Coral Gables and have 3 daughters, 2 sons and 5 grandchildren. His honors include: “Family of the Year” from Family Counseling Services and “Father of the Year” by the South Florida Father’s Day Council. This past year he was honored by the March of Dimes with the “Building Our Community” Award and also by the Human Services Coalition, the Junior League and the Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce – and he and his wife Roberta were honored with Barry University’s Laudare Medal for Outstanding Service. Nationally, he has been honored with the American Public Health Association Award of Excellence, the Lewis Hine Award for Children and Youth, the “Children’s Champion” award from the National Black Child Development Institute and the Fred Rogers Leadership Award from the Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families.