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## **How the Morning Mile® changed the lives of two Miami-Dade Parks' summer campers**

***Morning Mile, sponsored by AvMed, celebrates five years at Miami-Dade Parks' summer camps at End-of-Summer Bash, July 26, Tropical Park Equestrian Center***

**MIAMI (July 14, 2016)** – Five years ago, Chelsey and Moises Sanchez were overweight and leading sedentary lives. That was until their father enrolled them in Miami-Dade Parks' Fit2Play™ summer camp at Hammocks Community Park. One of the key components to the camp is the AvMed-sponsored Morning Mile® program, an opportunity for campers to begin each day by walking or running one mile. The kids soon began losing weight and quickly found themselves looking forward to their morning mile. Today, they enjoy a healthier lifestyle and a love for running.

AvMed and Morning Mile Founder Fitz Koehler will celebrate the five-year partnership with Miami-Dade Parks and the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade during this year's End-of-Summer Bash, Tuesday, July 26, 2016, 10 a.m. at Tropical Park Equestrian Center, 7900 SW 40 Street, in Miami.

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Javier Souto, District 10 will join representatives from AvMed, Miami-Dade Parks, the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade and Fitz Koehler who will lead more than 1,000 summer campers in a warm-up, followed by a one mile walk or run around the field.

"From the very first day, we knew this was something special for the kids and our collaboration with Miami-Dade County has made it even better," said AvMed Chief Marketing Officer James M. Repp. "It's more than a 'fun-run.' It teaches children early in life about the importance of keeping fit and leading a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and physical activity."

**MIAMI-DADE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT**

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“Thanks to the children who have participated over the years, to the outstanding staff at Miami-Dade Parks, and to AvMed for believing in the program from the very beginning,” said Koehler. “In believing in the program, AvMed has also always believed in the kids it has served. That’s what it’s all about.”

The Gainesville resident and fitness expert created The Morning Mile as a way to introduce daily walking or running to children at schools across the nation. It first came to Miami-Dade Parks’ summer camps, thanks to AvMed’s sponsorship, and continues to reward participants with a sneaker charm for every five miles completed. Over the past five years, more than 13,000 children have logged more than 325,000 miles. That’s the same as walking from here to the moon and then some. The Morning Mile has since expanded to 13 states and three countries around the world.

“The Morning Mile program has been a great addition to our summer camp curriculum. We’re grateful to AvMed and Fitness International for their continued commitment to the health of our kids and this community,” said Jack Kardys, director of Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces.

“Successful public private partnerships, such as the long-term partnership we share with AvMed, help us to provide quality and affordable recreational programs that impact children’s lives,” said Raul Garcia, president of the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade. “It’s my hope that more businesses in Miami-Dade will follow in the footsteps of AvMed and support our community’s kids.”

Fast forward five years and the siblings each have maintained their weight loss and now enjoy sports and running almost daily. Moises, now 17 and entering his senior year in high school in the fall, made it into the varsity cross country team and plans to do the ROTC program at university. Chelsey, now 16, plays soccer for her school’s team, and continues to apply the lessons learned in nutrition as well. Both are now volunteers at the very same park and summer camp that led them on a new path and where they feel right at home.

[Miami-Dade Parks](#) is a world-class parks system supported by the [Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade](#) and focused on Placemaking, Health and Fitness, and Conservation and Stewardship.

### **About AvMed**

In 1969, AvMed began in South Florida as Aviation Medicine to serve the growing airline industry with pilot physicals. Today, with headquarters in Miami and offices in every major metropolitan area of the state, AvMed aims to inspire its membership of more than 345,000 Floridians to celebrate an active lifestyle and “Embrace better health®.” One of Florida’s oldest and largest not-for-profit health plans, AvMed provides Medicare Advantage coverage in Broward and Miami-Dade counties, Individual and Family Plans in South Florida, as well as the Gainesville, Jacksonville and Orlando markets, and Group Health coverage for employers in more than 30 counties across the only state we’ve ever served. Well-known clients, healthcare providers and systems have been partners for decades, a testament to AvMed’s culture of service and satisfaction, which consistently ranks above statewide peers. For more information, visit [AvMed.org](#).

### **About The Morning Mile®**

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Created by Fitness® International LLC, the Morning Mile® is a before-school or camp walking/running program which allows children to start their day in an active way with fun, music and friends. Students get 30 minutes each day to run as far or as little as they choose with exciting reward necklaces to keep them motivated. The Morning Mile® boasts almost 200 programs in 13 states, three countries and over two million miles run! Free to the school and free to the student, The Morning Mile® is paid for by generous corporate partners like AvMed Health Plans, who is the largest sponsor in Florida with over 60 programs in action. To learn more about bringing The Morning Mile® to your favorite school or sponsoring the program, visit [www.MorningMile.com](http://www.MorningMile.com).

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*To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters and/or access to any Miami-Dade Parks sponsored function, contact Parks Disability Services at 305-755-7848 or e-mail [PDS@miamidade.gov](mailto:PDS@miamidade.gov) at least 7 days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may call 711, (Florida Relay Service).*

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