



# DO THE RIGHT THING OF MIAMI, INC.

C/O CITY OF MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT

400 N.W. 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE / ROOM 201-J / MIAMI, FL 33128

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MIAMI POLICE AND THE DO THE RIGHT THING PROGRAM HONOR STUDENTS FOR CHOOSING COURAGE OVER FEAR IN THE FACE OF GUNFIRE

*Liam Ortiz and Lucas Valerio honored for helping classmates reach safety during lockdown; fellow students recognized for lifesaving and courageous actions*

MIAMI, FL – February 18, 2026 – As school safety takes the national spotlight, the Do The Right Thing Program and Miami Police will honor 10 outstanding students out of almost 600 nominees for their courage, compassion, and leadership. Among the honorees are Liam Ortiz and Lucas Valerio, 5th graders at Pinecrest Academy South Charter, whose bravery during a frightening school lockdown exemplifies true heroism. While outside at recess, Liam and Lucas heard nearby gunshots and were alerted that the school was going into lockdown. Despite their own fear, Liam and Lucas worked together to break part of a fence and clear branches, helping multiple classmates reach safety. Alongside Liam and Lucas, other honorees are being recognized for reporting threats, seeking help for peers in crisis, performing lifesaving CPR and intervening in medical emergencies, alerting staff to potential weapons on campus, and demonstrating extraordinary resilience and generosity despite personal hardship. Together, these student heroes exemplify the impact of taking action and doing the right thing when it matters most.

**The ceremony takes place on Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 10:00 am in the auditorium of the Chief Clarence Dickson Police College, 350 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.**

Do The Right Thing, Inc. is a non-profit community-based program operating in cooperation with the Miami Police Department and other local law enforcement. The program serves school age youth throughout Miami-Dade County by recognizing positive accomplishments and behavior. Each month of the school year students are recognized for their positive decisions and rewarded with prizes including a tablet, plaque, and tickets and passes to the Miami Marlins, Papa John's, Zoo Miami, HistoryMiami Museum, Philip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, and Island Queen Cruises. Students also receive letters from U.S. Senators Ashley Moody and Rick Scott as well as Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar and Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. Two Special Recognition students are also selected and win trips to Rapids Water Park and Washington, D.C. Since 1990, Do The Right Thing has directly impacted over 270,000 youth across Miami-Dade County for their positive impact.

###

**A not-for-profit organization dedicated to recognizing and rewarding our youth**

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## January 2026 Do The Right Thing Winners

**Jacoby Darias and Samantha Gil** reported a serious threat to harm students after school, ensuring their peers and community were kept safe.

**Layla Green** bravely sought help for a friend in danger of self-harm, ensuring that her friend received the help needed.

**Celine Medrano** performed CPR on a classmate who experienced a medical emergency, ultimately helping save their life.

**Sixto Morales** exemplifies resilience and perseverance in the face of hardship after his family was displaced from the Li'l Abner Mobile Home Park.

**Liam Ortiz and Lucas Valerio** helped get classmates to safety after a nearby shooting prompted a school lockdown, exemplifying bravery and selflessness amidst a moment of crisis.

**Andrei Reyes and Maria Serrano** acted swiftly when a classmate fainted, providing immediate care and stabilizing her until paramedics arrived, reflecting leadership and compassion.

**Barry Sael** alerted school staff about the location of a knife that could've potentially been used as a dangerous weapon, helping maintain a safe school environment.