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Made lots of money. Gave lots away. This power couple now getting something back



Darlene Boytell-Pérez and Jorge Pérez at Julio Larraz, paintings exhibition at Azcaso Gallery in Wynwood on Saturday November 30th., 2013. **Alexia Fodere** - Miami Herald File

BY ALEX HARRIS

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Jorge Pérez spent most of his life focused on acquiring money. Now, he has turned his attention to giving it away.

Born in Buenos Aires to parents who fled Cuba, he worked his way up to become the “Condo King” of South Florida as founder, chairman and CEO of The Related Group.

When he was young and broke, Pérez said he gave more of his time and less of his money. Now that Forbes pegs his [net worth at \\$2.8 billion](#), the real estate developer has a hefty philanthropic portfolio to match.

He and his wife, Darlene Boytell-Pérez, an accomplished nurse practitioner and clinical researcher, have a right brain-left brain philosophy of philanthropy.

Pérez is well known for the \$40 million cash and art donation that put his name on the bayfront Herzog & de Meuron-designed Pérez Art Museum Miami, but the couple's \$250,000 donation for the Nursing Lab for FIU College of Nursing and Health Sciences (her alma mater) is the largest individual gift in the history of the program.

As Pérez puts it, "There's so many needs. It's hard to say no."

The diverse donations don't surprise Harve Mogul, CEO of United Way of Miami-Dade, who has known Pérez for a quarter of a century.

"A good, safe community can't just have good healthcare. You need good schools, good culture," he said. "Jorge cares about everything."

Mogul said the couple's long history of charitable giving earned them the United Way of Miami-Dade's Tocqueville Award for Outstanding Philanthropy, which was set to be presented Thursday night at the Tocqueville Grand Reception.

"It's not just about out-of-pocket money," he said. "It's their ability to put their expertise on the table."

When Mogul's signature project with United Way, the [Center for Excellence in Early Education](#), was underway, he recalls how Pérez showed up and taught the project managers about building in sync with the community. When the center was built, Boytell-Pérez stepped in and helped come up with programming.

To say the Pérez couple is heavily involved in the community is an understatement. Jorge chairs the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council, directs the Miami International Film Festival and is a member of the the University of Miami's Board of Trustees. Darlene is an adjunct clinical preceptor for FIU's Nurse Practitioner Graduate Program, serves on the boards of Gulliver Schools and The United Cerebral Palsy and is a founding ambassador of PAMM.

Jorge Pérez is also known for signing "[the Giving Pledge](#)," a campaign founded by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett where signers agree to give away half of their wealth to charity.

"I've always thought that wealthy people have a moral obligation to give back to those communities that made it possible for them to amass wealth," Pérez said. "We want to make Miami a better place for everybody."