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is off to a smokin' 2017

FOOD & WINE ISSUE

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Emilio Estefan's 305 Style
Exclusive Interview with José Andrés

the movers



{GIVER}

Matt Allen

The Related Group's COO is pushing hard to end cancer. Watch him lead the pack at this month's Dolphins Cancer Challenge.

Matt Allen, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of The Related Group, is not someone with a lot of downtime. He oversees operations for one of the country's largest real estate conglomerates, also the leading developer of luxury high-rises in South Florida.

Scan the glossy, ever-multiplying Miami skyline and you see the sweep of Related's influence on the city. Allen is credited with raising more than \$13 billion in equity capital and debt for Related since he joined the company in 1999. Still, he has found the time to make philanthropy a major part of his agenda.

His focus for the past several months has been on the February 11 Dolphins Cancer Challenge, which benefits the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Research Center through a full day of events that includes a 5K run/walk, six bicycle rides of various lengths and a concert by the Counting Crows at the Hard Rock Stadium, the finish line for all of the day's pulse-raising, community-building activities. Since its inaugural event in 2010, DCC has raised close to \$17 million.

"What's fantastic is that 100 percent of the money raised goes directly to Sylvester," Allen said. "There are so many other charities around that have very high overhead."

WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH

Allen, who was born in Michigan and moved to Miami from California when he was 7, attended Barry University and then Florida International University for an MBA, and considers his involvement in the South Florida community a personal imperative.

"Every dollar raised by DCC goes toward research at Sylvester to develop protocols and methodologies to help cure cancer," he said. "All world-class cities need a cancer-research and -treatment center like Sylvester. We're very lucky to have them right here in our community."

Allen also is a member of the foundation board for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Miami, a member of the Orange Bowl Committee, a trustee for the United Way of Miami-Dade and a board member for Miami Country Day School, which his three children attend.

'If you are lucky enough to achieve something in your community, it is mandatory to return something to that community.'

Allen, who counts Pinch Kitchen and Il Gabbiano among his favorite Miami restaurants, is not only on the DCC's executive council and advisory board, but he leads Team Related — a group of more than 200 members who turn out to ride, run or walk each year.

"I also host an event for DCC at my house every year, and it's remarkable to see how the people we invite — bankers, attorneys, contractors, subcontractors, friends and neighbors — are eager to give. Sadly, every one of us has been touched at some point by this terrible disease," said Allen, whose father-in-law beat bone cancer after being given a 2-percent chance of survival.

THE NEXT GENERATION

But there is another regular fundraiser for Sylvester at Allen's Miami Shores home that he is most proud of, and it's one he doesn't helm himself. Scaring for Caring, which so far has raised nearly \$200,000, turns the place into a haunted house each Halloween, complete with ghouls, goblins and food trucks.

The whole thing is organized by his eldest, Mary Elizabeth Allen, 17, a senior at Miami Country Day, and her childhood bestie, Christopher Rodriguez, who goes to St. Thomas Aquinas High in Fort Lauderdale.

"Scaring for Caring is an incredible teaching experience for all of the kids who work on it," Allen said. "It teaches them the basic principles of running a business. They have to develop a budget, create a marketing plan, raise the funds and execute their vision. Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios would be proud. My wife, Lisa, and I sure are."

WORDS BY LYDIA MARTIN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK GARCIA / SHOT ON LOCATION AT HARD ROCK STADIUM