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## Director of Conchita Espinosa Academy to celebrate 50 years as school leader

BY ELISABELA ALVAREZ-VALLS

Maribel Zubieta-Diaz, director of Conchita Espinosa Academy and Conservatory of the Arts, celebrates her 50th anniversary as an educator and leader of the school.

Mrs. Diaz, as her students have known her for decades, is the daughter of school founder, Conchita Espinosa. Fifty years ago, when Conchita Espinosa Academy had recently reopened its doors in Miami, Espinosa called her daughter and asked her to move back to Miami from New York City, where she resided at the time, to assist her in running the school.

Since then, Diaz has taught every grade level in the school. She has been at the forefront of the school and Conservatory of the Arts on every level, and has been responsible for the vision, growth, and refinement of its programs.

Conchita Espinosa Academy is now home to 625 students. The Conservatory of the Arts additionally serves a large majority of the students in the school as well as a significant population of students from other schools in the community who participate in the Conservatory's after-school music, dance, theater, visual arts, and martial arts programs.

The school is accredited at the regional, state, national and international level and offers its students an integrated and well-rounded education, including academic excellence, a sophisticated arts and humanities foundation, and a strong sense of self-worth and human values.

"I marvel at the journey I chose to take with so many over 50 years ago," Diaz said. "It has always been our purpose to give each of our students so much more than an academic education. I have encouraged and pushed for everyone to understand the importance of



Maribel Zubieta-Diaz (center) is pictured at a previous event.

questioning, of sharing what you know, and examining established rules and ideas in order to decide for yourself...

"We have created an expanding community of learners and dreamers and thinkers and creators of knowledge and beauty and grace. This journey, my journey, the CEA journey has been extraordinary."

Diaz's anniversary will be celebrated at the Conchita Espinosa Festival of the Arts on Saturday, June 2, at Miami-Dade County Auditorium, 2901 W Flagler St. The Festival has been a biennial tradition close to the hearts of students, alumni, and faculty since the school and conservatory's inception in 1933. This year's theme is "Journey," in honor of Diaz's 50-year journey and the journeys of the many unique and remarkable lives that

pass through the hallways of CEA each day.

"Our commitment to excellence in the academics and the arts, our dedication to cultivating the human spirit, our joy in discovering the uniqueness of each individual, our gratitude for the trust that is placed in us each day are packed in our suitcases and ready to continue the journey," Diaz said.

"No matter where the journey may take us, we will always know who we are and that our suitcases have what we need to encounter the difficulties and the joys that are before us."

The Festival of the Arts will showcase over 450 students under the age of 18 on one stage, each one sharing his or her passion and love with each other and the audience.

Tickets for the Festival are on sale through Ticketmaster.com.