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## FISHER ISLAND WORKER SENDS TOYS SOUTH

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BY LIANA KOZLOWSKI Ikozlowski@MiamiHerald.com Christmas has passed and presents have been opened, but José Fuyana is still asking for **toys**.

He wants teddy bears, train sets, basketballs, tennis rackets and even Barbie dolls.

The **Fisher Island** resident/ **worker** is the founder of You and Me Together, a program that collects **toys** and sporting equipment to donate to kids in Mendoza, Argentina.

The program has been around for more than two years now, but this is the first year Fuyana is reaching out to communities outside of **Fisher Island** for help.

"I have big dreams for this project and for these kids," Fuyana said. "This is something that has always been in my head."

This year, with the help of Nina Fabbri, a volunteer with the foundation, news of the program reached Miami Dade Community College, and gifts from students and administrators began trickling into the Wellness Center at the Kendall Campus.

"This project gave us the chance to give these kids an opportunity to play and develop their health and fitness skills at the same time," said Cookie Rosell, the director of the Wellness Center. "It also helps them develop relationships and hopefully inspires them to give back to their community some day."

Fuyana, whose mother lives in Mendoza, goes to Argentina almost every year and says he felt the need to do something in the community.

After meeting Laura Rocco, a tennis instructor in Mendoza who told Fuyana about her dream to open a recreational youth center, Fuyana said he knew what to do.

"One day I made a decision. I'm not rich, but I work in **Fisher Island** and through my job I meet people every day. Little by little I just started talking to them about the idea."

Fuyana started to gather more and more **toys** and sporting equipment, specifically tennis rackets and tennis balls, which he then shipped to Rocco, who now gives lessons to 60 kids.

About 10 volunteers in Mendoza then helped sort and package the **toys** and delivered them to kids within the poorest villages.

The foundation, which has collected more than 100 **toys** this year, will distribute a shipment of **toys** on Los Reyes Magos, Three Kings Day, and will **send** another shipment later in January.

But Fuyana says he hopes to do more someday. "It's so frustrating because some of these kids are sick and hungry, and we're just giving **toys**. But when they look up at you and smile, I keep that in my mind and it pushes me to keep doing this and keep trying. I know right now it's just a simple **toy**, but tomorrow it's going to be more than that," said Fuyana.

In the future, Fuyana says the foundation wants to give more **toys**, but also donate money to expand the small recreational center.

"We believe that sports are the best thing for kids to be away from the streets and drugs. The idea is to also give them milk or fruit or something when they come. And to get them playing soccer and basketball, too. We have a lot of plans, but we need to be patient and we need money."

## HOW TO HELP

For information on how to help José Fuyana's organization, visit <http://youandmetogether.org> or e-mail: [donate@youandmetogether.org](mailto:donate@youandmetogether.org).

\* Phone: 866-982-6363

\* Money donations can be sent to: P.O. Box 398436, Miami, FL 33239

HOMETOWN HERO: José Fuyana with two children in Mendoza, Argentina, after bags of **toys** and snacks were distributed on one of his trips.



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