

Homestead:

New life begins on Washinton Avenue

Mini-mall hopes to spark economy

By MIGUEL PEREZ
Staff Writer

Long after Hurricane Andrew's destruction, the magic hand of revitalization and reconstruction continues to beautify Homestead.

The old Woolworth building at 224 Washington Ave. — one of the town's landmarks from a bygone era — has been converted into one of Homestead's classiest mini-malls.

Thanks to funds provided by the city of Homestead, Metro-Dade's Community Development grants, loans from the Community Bank of Homestead and Peoples' Bank, a long-awaited dream has come to life.

Last weekend, amid the hoopla surrounding the inaugural race at the Homestead Motorsports complex, mall owners Pat Mellerson,

Richard Deosarran, and Vera and Roy Phillips grandly opened the Pioneer Mall. Roy Phillips is president of Miami-Dade Community College Homestead Campus.

Together they form the New Homestead Group, Inc.

Ten stores are located inside the white southern colonial-style building. Tiled hallways lead to spacious and carpeted shops. Two customer-friendly built-in bench-

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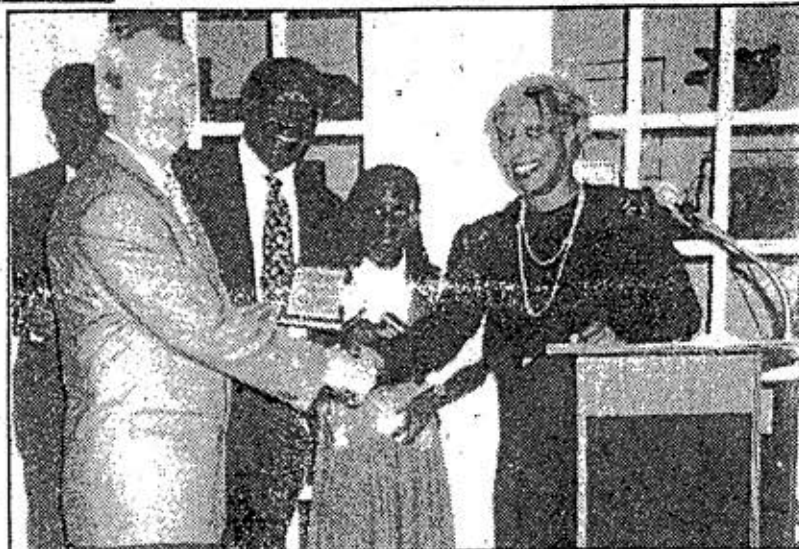


PHOTO BY MIGUEL PEREZ

A DREAM COME TRUE — While Homestead Vice Mayor Roscoe Warren, Roy Phillips and daughter, April look on, Pat Mellerson presents architect Robert Barnes with a commemorative plaque. Barnes designed the southern colonial-style building on Washington Avenue.

High hopes for Washington Avenue

MINI-MALL, from 1A

es provide added comfort to shoppers.

Two shops are owned and operated by Mellerson and Deosarran.

"Our stores are upscale and will cater to shoppers with discriminating tastes for higher quality goods and services," said Mellerson. "We believe in this venture so much that Richard and I have established our own shops inside the mall."

Stores include Pat's Collectables, Rick's Gift Shoppe, Pagan-Lopez Fine Art Gallery, Art & Starts, First Impressions Bridal Shop, Together Company, Kelani's, Cowboy's Mexican Shop, G.R. Home Appliances and C.P. Travel Agency.

The road to success has never been easy, and the New Homestead Group has had to pay its dues. 'Roofers from hell' stole \$10,000 the group had paid for repairs to the building's storm damaged roof.

Consequently, the project was

delayed for a year while they struggled to come up with more money to pay for the reconstruction project.

"We were determined to continue," said Mellerson. "We kept on trying to get additional funds. We approached quite a few banks and they said that they were not interested in investing in the area."

According to Mellerson, the bankers told them they would not help because the building had been badly damaged by the hurricane and because it was in an 'undesirable area.'

However, the group persisted and were not about to let the turn-downs destroy their dreams.

"Finally, after many rejections, John Brown, a vice president at Community Bank, heard our plea and came to our rescue," said Mellerson. "They approved us for a loan of about \$300,000."

The mini-mall is one of Florida's first African American-owned and operated shopping malls.