

**PEMBROKE PINES, FL**  
**Mayor Frank C. Ortis**

## **Promoting Inclusion in a Diverse Community**

*“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.”*

*– Mahatma Gandhi*

In front of the City of Pembroke Pines Charles F. Dodge City Center, which is home to City Hall, is a welcome sign that “says it all,” in the view of Mayor Frank Ortis: “We are Building an Inclusive Community.” Each year, proactive steps are taken to ensure that this statement remains factual, the Mayor explains, through special events, programs, activities, art exhibitions, committees, and the creation of special community spaces.

As a City of Kindness, Pembroke Pines takes particular pride in an annual event, the Pembroke Pines Kindness Initiative “Community Peace Picnic.” Introduced in 2017, the picnic, which promotes kindness, compassion and forgiveness, attracts more than 1,000 participants, with musical performances by local students, storytelling, awareness-building activities and, of course, the Community Peace Picnic itself that encourages residents of all ages to bring a blanket or chairs, decorate their area, and enjoy the afternoon as a community. Awards are presented for the best-decorated picnic areas.

The City’s Senior/Community Center maintains an ongoing “Blooms of Kindness” campaign, a citywide scavenger hunt that promotes positivity and kindness. The Center’s pottery students and staff create beautiful clay blooms that are scattered throughout the city, with finders of the blooms invited to keep them or re-hide them for others to find.

The City Commission established a Diversity and Heritage Advisory Board and encouraged the creation of an Interfaith Council to ensure that all the voices of ethnicities and faiths are heard. The Mayor was supported in his goal to name the street entering a beloved and popular city park “Peace Way” and to create a statue of Mahatma Gandhi for the park. On an ongoing basis, the Frank C. Ortis Art Gallery and Exhibit Hall, as well as the city’s Studio 18 in the Pines art center, present exhibitions and conduct workshops for all ages and abilities, including students with disabilities, to ensure that residents’ access to the city’s music and culture is not limited.

Mayor Ortis says that there is a “mindset” in his city, not necessarily in written policy format, that consistently honors the differences in others, opening the doorway to kindness and understanding in a variety of ways and through each city department, to diminish and destroy the presence of any hate, intolerance or discrimination.

*Additional information is available from Karen Richards, Executive Assistant, at [Krichards@ppines.com](mailto:Krichards@ppines.com) or 954-450-1020.*