

## Jack Latona: Focused on the Future

No one can accuse Jack Latona of living in the past or resting on his laurels. With a varied and highly successful career in government, law and urban planning, he has earned every right to sit back and relax. Instead, he's facing the future head-on – and inspiring others to follow his lead.

In 1999, in the frenzy surrounding the arrival of the year 2000, he taught a course, "Creating the Millennium," at Florida Atlantic University. "It focused on where we've been, where we are and where we're going," Latona says. "Previously, I hadn't thought that much about the future. But I discovered that the future is knowable. We can see what's coming and get better prepared for it."

That realization inspired Latona to establish the Center for Creating the Future – a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is "to assist and enable organizations in grasping and shaping their future now rather than passively waiting for it to happen." Latona explains further: "I started saying in 1999 that our life expectancies were going to change dramatically. We can see the trends. But no one has faced the implications of all of that."

Latona and his colleagues at the Center focus on these issues in their consulting projects, while he explores the ramifications of "living forever" in his own research and through the Lifelong Learning courses he teaches for FAU. "Living to 101 or 102 is more and more likely," he suggests, as a result of improved medical care, advancements in health care technology and developments in genetics. Longer lives will require adjustments, though, in the way we approach such issues as retirement, income, education, employment and even marriage. "We're just scratching the surface," he says.

Latona's current focus on the future isn't surprising given the many years



he has spent looking ahead in his professional and political life. He has been deputy to the mayor of San Francisco, project director for the New York State Urban Development Corporation, director of the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority, chair of the Broward County Metropolitan Planning Organization and a member of the City of Fort Lauderdale Planning and Zoning Board. He was elected to the Fort Lauderdale City Commission, where he served for nine years.

He and his wife, Kay, moved to Fort Lauderdale in 1977. Kay was the first woman to be a partner in a major law firm in Broward County, he notes. She is now retired and spends a good bit of her time collecting first editions by Florida mystery writers. "We have books all over the place," he quips. Latona reads many of them – and reviews them occasionally for *Go Riverwalk* magazine, for which he also writes a column about urban planning.

Not surprisingly, Latona's cultural interests are varied. "I'm not a practitioner of the arts; I'm an appreciator," he notes. His latest passion is satellite radio. "It's 99 percent music and 1 percent chatter, and there's an extraordinary range of music available."

He has been actively involved with the Stonewall Library and Archives in Fort Lauderdale, where he is assisting with fundraising and

planning for a new facility to house the widely respected collection of gay and lesbian materials.

As might be expected, he has a strong personal interest in architecture and design. "We should be more concerned about our visual environment," he observes. That background comes into play constantly in his role as a member of the Broward Cultural Council, to which he was appointed in 2001 by Commissioner John Rodstrom. Today, Latona is a member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Finance Committee. He thoroughly enjoys the opportunity.

"It's a window to many things I probably wouldn't be sufficiently aware of," Latona explains. "I've been astonished by the amount of quality cultural activities and the extraordinarily gifted people we have here. Broward County has done an extraordinary job in making its cultural investment available to a larger percentage of the population." As an example, he cites the county's Public Art and Design program, "which went from the idea of putting up a statue to integrating art into the facility. Look at what they've done in the airport. I think the buses are wonderful," he says, referring to the rental car center shuttle buses adorned with colorful images by Romero Britto and other artists.

"And then you get to help," he adds. "Working with the VISION Broward program to make people aware of the economic aspects of the cultural environment and bringing the economic and business community together with the cultural community is something I'm in a position to do."

If the past is any indication, it's a safe bet that this represents another in a long line of goals that Jack Latona is going to achieve in the future. ★

– Leon M. Rubin