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# 5 THINGS TO KNOW IN #MIAMITECH: NSU LEVAN CENTER'S NEW SPACE MISSION, CLERISY'S LAUNCH & MORE

MARCH 16, 2021



By Nancy Dahlberg

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## NSU's Levan Center of Innovation launches space initiative

To boldly go where no South Florida institution has gone before, the [Alan B. Levan | NSU Broward Center of Innovation](#) announced a new initiative to connect the South Florida region to Florida's Space Coast and beyond. Through its so-called LEVEL5: SPACE DOCK initiative, NSU's Levan Center wants to formally establish South Florida as a contributing partner to the space sector, and, and has tapped Andrew Aldrin to direct it.

The initial focus will be to promote space entrepreneurship in the South Florida region by creating a collaborative environment in the space sector for industry, government, academia, and investors to pursue entrepreneurial and research activities for the advancement of the South Florida economy, NSU said in its announcement. "The goal of LEVEL5: SPACE DOCK is to help put South Florida and NSU on the map in the space sector and to incubate and accelerate space entrepreneurship opportunities in the region," said John Wensveen, Ph.D., NSU's Chief Innovation Officer and Executive Director of Levan Center.

In addition to his role with LEVEL5: SPACE DOCK, Andrew Aldrin serves as the president of the Aldrin Family Foundation and was director of the Aldrin Space Institute at Florida Institute of Technology. Aldrin has held executive positions at Boeing, United Launch

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Alliance, and Moon Express. He was also a member of the research staff at the RAND Corporation and the Institute for Defense Analyses and is a consultant to NASA.

The Levan Center, a 54,000 square foot innovation center with incubator and accelerator programs, a makerspace and a cybersecurity training range, is slated to open in July 2021 on NSU's main campus in Davie.

**READ MORE ON REFRESH: [WHAT WILL NSU'S LEVAN CENTER LOOK LIKE? PLUS DETAILS OF ITS INAUGURAL EVENT](#)**

## 2

### **Clerisy officially launches \$100 million growth fund**

Gilt and Glamsquad co-founder Alexandra Wilkis Wilson and her partner Lisa Myers officially launched their \$100 million growth equity investment fund and announced their first investment in Dormify, an e-commerce platform for dorm room and Gen Z home décor.

Their new firm, [Clerisy](#), provides a platform for institutions, family offices and high-net-worth individuals to invest in promising, innovative consumer companies that have established traction but need additional capital and expertise to scale, the company said in its [announcement](#) last week. The firm's name is derived from the word "clerisy," meaning a group of learned, collaborative, innovative people.

Before forming Clerisy, Wilson, now a Miami resident, co-founded and served as chief merchandising officer of luxury e-commerce platform Gilt.com and co-founded and served as CEO of Glamsquad. Her experience includes strategy, marketing, sales and operations roles at Allergan, Bulgari and Louis Vuitton and she has advised and/or invested in more than 50 early-stage businesses. Myers previously served as a partner on the flagship buyout fund at L Catterton, the world's largest consumer-focused private equity fund, and is president of Aspirational Consumer Lifestyle Corp., a \$240 million SPAC in which L Catterton is a minority shareholder and which recently announced its intended merger with private aviation firm Wheels Up.

"Lisa is based in the Bahamas and I'm based here, so we really view Miami as our headquarters. She brings the investor expertise and I'm the one with the operator background - the investor-operator duo is unique. We're a growth fund investing in companies with more than \$10 million in revenues who are looking to scale, and we usually invest in consumer-facing tech. These companies already have product-market fit and they're looking to grow. We're particularly interested in health + wellness, beauty, and the commercialization of healthcare," Wilson said in [a recent Refresh Miami interview](#).

**READ MORE ON REFRESH: [A Q&A WITH ALEXANDRA WILKIS WILSON, 3-TIME CO-FOUNDER, 2 EXITS, AND A NEW MIAMI-BASED FUND](#)**

## 3

### **Delivery Dudes to be acquired by Waitr**

Delivery Dudes, a Delray Beach-based on-demand delivery service, is selling its assets to Louisiana-based online restaurant pickup and delivery platform Waitr Holdings for about \$23 million in stock and cash, [the South Florida Business Journal reported](#). Customers may continue to place orders through the Delivery Dudes app and website, or by phone.

Delivery Dudes, founded by Jayson Koss in 2009, delivered to more than 50 cities throughout Florida, plus select cities in Pennsylvania and Tennessee. The publicly traded Waitr, acquired in 2018 through a \$308 million reverse takeover by Lancadia Holdings, is expanding nationwide and had been eying the Florida market.

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"We've been working hard for the last decade and are excited to join Waitr, a company that shares our entrepreneurial spirit and believes in us. With Waitr's resources, we look forward to growing the South Florida market and working to help Waitr expand their market presence," said Koss, Delivery Dudes' CEO, said in a statement.

## 4

### **MDC, FAU partner on AI advanced degree pathway**

Miami Dade College and Florida Atlantic University have established new "4+1" articulation agreements that will allow MDC students a seamless transition to advanced programs FAU's College of Engineering and Computer Science. Through the agreement, MDC graduates with a bachelor's degree in data analytics will have a direct pathway to a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence at FAU. Those who graduate from MDC with a bachelor's degree in electrical and computer engineering technology can complete FAU's master's in computer engineering in just one year. These new pathways expand the existing agreement between MDC and FAU that includes master's degrees in biomedical engineering, electrical engineering, and information technology and management.

In related news, FAU's College of Engineering and Computer Science recently unveiled its Center for Connected Autonomy and Artificial Intelligence to accelerate the development of innovative artificial intelligence and autonomy solutions. The center housed on the Boca Raton campus, staffed by eight senior level faculty and 18 graduate and undergraduate students, is immersed in projects focused on underwater, surface, air and space applications that are supported by autonomous resilient machine-to-machine wireless networking. [You can read more about it here.](#)

## 5

### **Code/Art's virtual festival for K-12 girls is right around the corner**

Code/Art is gearing up for its first all-virtual [Code/Art Fest](#), an annual creative coding conference for K-12 girls and STEAM educators, which will take place March 20. [Code/Art](#), a nonprofit founded by Amy Austin Renshaw, aims to increase the number of girls studying computer science by delighting and inspiring them with the creative possibilities of coding.

This year's speaker lineup includes Danielle Fienberg, Director of Lighting at Pixar Animation Studios, and Emma Yang, the 16-year-old founder of Timeless, an app that helps friends and family stay connected during the early stages of Alzheimer's by using AI-based facial recognition technology. The conference will include a full day of activities, including coding workshops, a STEAM Expo, an interactive art display, a pitch competition and a career panel.

"Many of our students come with pre-concieved notions that coding is hard and/or boring, but our art-infused curriculum and welcoming approach debunks those stereotypes," Reshaw said.

For more information and tickets, [go here.](#)

*Got #miamitech news? Email Nancy Dahlberg at [ndahlbergbiz@gmail.com](mailto:ndahlbergbiz@gmail.com) and follow her on Twitter [@ndahlberg](#)*

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I am a writer and editor with extensive media experience and a passion for journalism and serving the community. Most of my career has been spent with the Miami Herald in business news, and my expertise is writing about tech and entrepreneurs. I love hosting this blog for Refresh Miami and we

aim to be the go-to site for South Florida startup and tech news, features and views. Have news? Contact me at ndahlbergbiz@gmail.com. Thanks for reading!

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