

HOME, HEART & HOME

3rd Quarter 2020

NEWSLETTER



INSIDE: ***Hope, Heart & Home*** Community Initiatives

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| July 13 | <i>Educate Tomorrow's Dr. Amy Rubinson</i> speaks at July Meeting |
| July 19 | <i>Home, Heart & Home</i> -Trained Guardians ad Litem Honored. |
| August 8 | With SFFAPA & Citrus FCN: Back-To-School Backpack Drive-By a Huge Hit |
| August 10 | <i>Youth Advisory Council's DeMarco Mott</i> Amazes Ministry |
| September 14 | <i>Jim Haj</i> and <i>The Children's Trust</i> : A New HHH Partner |

HHH MENTORING: **DeMarco Mott** & The Citrus FCN *Youth Advisory Council (YAC)*

FALL OPERATION: Feeding Foster Families with *One More Child*, *Foster Parent Peer Advocates* & *Citrus Toys For Tots Christmas Drive-By* with *South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association*

Spotlight: HHH's **Youngest Child Advocate**: *Profile of Elizabeth I. Romanek*

HOPE, HEART & HOME

HOSTS JULY VIRTUAL MEETING

28 Child Advocates Hear *Educate Tomorrow's*

Dr. Amy Rubinson Speaks

Active August Planned

HOPE, HEART & HOME held their second virtual ministry meeting last night (July 13) with a good assortment of new and old HHH Child Advocates and community leaders. The team tackled three pressing issues: (1) on-going volunteer recruiting and promotions; (2) the August 8 *Back-to-School Backpack Drive-By*; and (3) the training sessions for HHH volunteers to support college students who have aged out of foster care.

Ministry Liaisons updated attendees with news from each of our child welfare partners and South Dade Deanery parishes. On-line bulletin announcements seem to be working with parishes that email weekly information to their parishioners. No altar "calls" or recruiting events can be planned yet. Welfare partners continue limited virtual interviews and ad hoc trainings. *Florida Foster Care Review* has put off training new panelists until the fall. *Citrus* has announced their calendar of trainings for new parents (PRIDE classes) in August.

Operations Manager, **Mike Carrier**, reviewed plans for the **Backpack Drive-By** on August 8 and requested volunteers to sign up with him for specific time slots 10 AM (set-up) to 3 PM (knock down. (mcarrier55@gmail.com). Our partners, *Citrus Family Care Network* and *South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association* will stuff Adidas back packs with donated school supplies.

Lorenzo Cosio (GAL- St. Louis) has new HHH t-shirts designed and ready for sale next week. Child Advocates can text/email Lo (lcosio@bellsouth.net) to reserve shirts (\$9 ea). We hope all our volunteers for the August 8 event can sport their new shirts!

The future training of HHH volunteers was addressed by **Dr. Amy Rubinson** who joined us from *Educate Tomorrow*. Two training dates for volunteers interested in helping college students enrolled at Miami Dade and FIU are planned in August (Dates to be announced). Amy and John Gentile will finalize the training material and specific roles HHH volunteers will play. Thank you, Amy, for joining our meeting!

HHH welcomed new volunteers **Rosa Perez Lacayo** (*Holy Rosary-St. Richards*), and **Ada Gonzalez** (*Our Lady of Lourdes*); "old" veterans **Maria DeWitt** (GAL-SJN), **JC Planas** (GAL-St. Louis), **Richard Candia** (St. John Neumann), and **Carmenza Ortiz** (HRSR); community leaders **David Castillon** (*His House*), **Trudy Petrovich** (*Quality Parenting Initiative QPI*), **Kimberly Lopez** (*Citrus*) and **Nadine Rolle** (*Citrus*); new Foster Parents **Maria, Fred, & Elizabeth Romanek** (*Holy Rosary - St Richard's*) and **Yohandra Acosta** (St. John Neumann); Liaison Leaders **Maria Jacques** (GAL), **Malvi Longoria** (GAL), **Joann Pierre** (GAL), **Harrison Griffis**, **Ada Avallone** (GAL), **Eric Schwindeman** (GAL), and **Dr. John Gentile**.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Announcements from SJN bulletin of July 19, 2020

Hope, Heart & Home-Trained GALs Honorably Mentioned in Miami GAL Newsletter



Proud to see 4 of our HHH-trained Guardians ad Litem honored in this third volume of 11th Circuit *The Guardian* newsletter.

JOANN PIERRE was cited for the relationships she establishes, the information she imparts, and the professional way she handles her responsibilities. Joann also serves as HHH's liaison to Citrus Family Care Network (where she is a recruiter) and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Two of Joann's new HHH families graduated from the foster parent PRIDE classes last month.

HUGO GUZMAN is the featured in the "Volunteer Spotlight." He is balancing his work as a GAL with completion of his PhD in environmental economics and running a small furniture store. Hugo is also working on a documentary film about a Miami foster child and his two adoptive fathers.

MARIA JACQUES is commended for her work with "out of court cases" Maria is most effective bringing together parents, case workers, therapists, and CAMS to keep the best interest of her children in the forefront. She also used her "people skills" to recruit new HHH volunteers from Holy Rosary-St. Richard's Catholic Church.

JONATHAN RODRIGUEZ is cited for his passionate work with all the children in the 3 cases he currently manages. He has been particularly effective working around the obstacles the covid crisis has placed in his way. Unable to physically visit his children, "Jrod" has been tireless in his efforts communicating with all parties.

CONGRATULATIONS to all four Guardian ad Litem for the work they do with our children and to our HHH Trainer, **Karen Kerr** (GAL) for a job well done!.





HOPE, HEART & HOME

CITRUS & SFFAPA HAND OUT

**1 7 5
BACKPACKS**

**to Foster and Adoptive Families
at St. John Neumann Event**

Sixty HHH Child Advocates and community activists made going back to school a little bit easier for over 175 children in foster and adoptive care. They assembled at *St. John Neumann Catholic Church* to organize a backpack give-away to hundreds of families as they lined up in the parking lot Saturday morning. Three child welfare organizations - *Hope, Heart, and Home*, *South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (SFFAPA)*, and *Citrus Family Care Network (CFCN)* partnered to field teams from 9 AM to 3 PM.

After four months in virtual hibernation, over **30** HHH Child Advocates braved the torrid heat to work this event. Our set-up team included **Mike Carrier, Alexander Schwindeman, Stefan Schwindeman, and Eric Schwindeman** (GAL). The registration team of volunteers from *SFFAPA* with **Minette Rivero** supervising (she was everywhere!) - checked in cars as they arrived. They were joined later at the tent by a team of *Citrus* workers -including **Marta Torres, Nadine Rolle, Kimberly Lopez, and Leslie**. The distribution center under **Madeline and Madison Amador** (*SFFAPA*) and **Carmenza Ortiz** (HHH) used a mix of HHH child advocates and high school students to deliver backpacks to the cars.

HHH Child Advocates also included husband-wife teams: **Luis and Maria Andujas** (GAL), **Richard and Martha Pomares-Candia** (GAL), **Steve and Ada Avallone** (GAL), and Attorney **Harrison and Ana Sophia Griffis**. Three entire families worked the event: the Schwindeman's; **Mia, Olivia, Pam**, (Lo's three daughters) and **Lorenzo Cosio** (GAL); and foster family **Fred, Maria, and Elizabeth Romanek** (our youngest worker!). HHH workers included **Mary Kay Gaffney, Dr. John Gentile, Maria Jacques** (GAL), **Rosa Perez-Lacayo, Jimmy Searle, Dr. John Sennetti** (GAL), and **Wieland Uchdorf** (GAL). HHH also welcomed newcomers from *St. Louis*: **John Hoffman and Jose Umana**.



Special thanks:

To HHH Operations Manager **Mike Carrier** who planned every logistical detail of this event: conference calls with Partners, hours on Friday afternoon to hanging our banner and staging tables and chairs, securing parking lot cones, attaching tableclothes, making signs, and carefully scheduling our volunteers into overlapping teams while overseeing set-up and knock down. Mike

grabbed the bull by the horns and ran with this event. We owe him so much. Congratulations for pulling this off, Mike! Great job.

To **Monsignor Pablo Navarro**, who had the foresight to schedule this event at St. John Neumann. Thank you for your belief in us, your support, and opening prayer. We are blessed with your leadership and compassion!

And to **Lorenzo Cosio** who designed, printed, and distributed our new HHH shirts in time (with a hurricane bearing down on us) so we could all look so "resplendent" as a HHH team. We received numerous complements on the shirts, Lo!

Thanks to all the photos submitted of the event, especially the professional photography of **John Hoffman**. It took us over 6 emails to include all of them! Malvi will post them soon on our facebook page. **Be sure to open all 6 emails!**

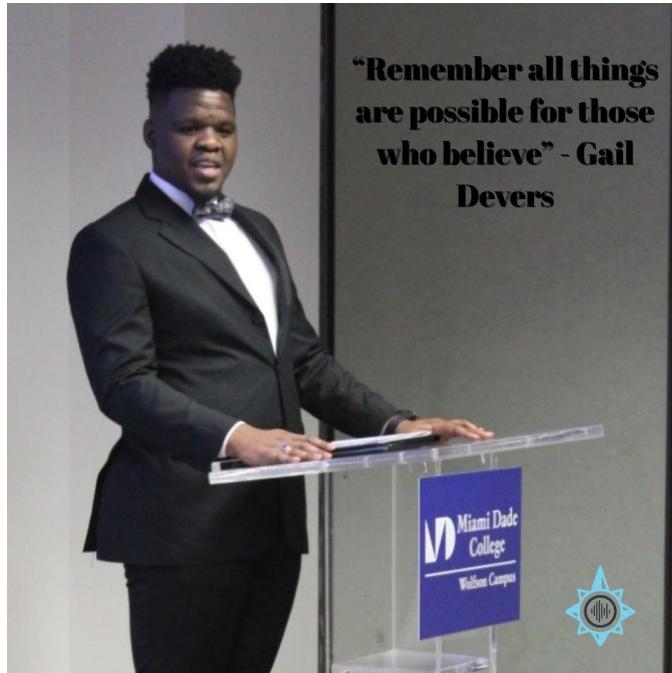
Great event had by all! Can't say enough about the quality of people who make up this Ministry.

God Bless You All!



DeMARCO MOTT AMAZES MINISTRY!

Hope, Heart & Home Hosts Youth Advisory Head
24 Child Advocates Re-Unite After Backpack Blitz



Fresh off their successful *Back-To-School Backpack Drive-By*, the intrepid child advocates of the ***Hope, Heart & Home*** Ministry held their August monthly meeting to hear guest speaker, **DeMarco Mott**, the dynamic leader of *Citrus' Youth Advisory Council*, who shared his story growing up in the child welfare system and how his early faith-based connection saved his life.

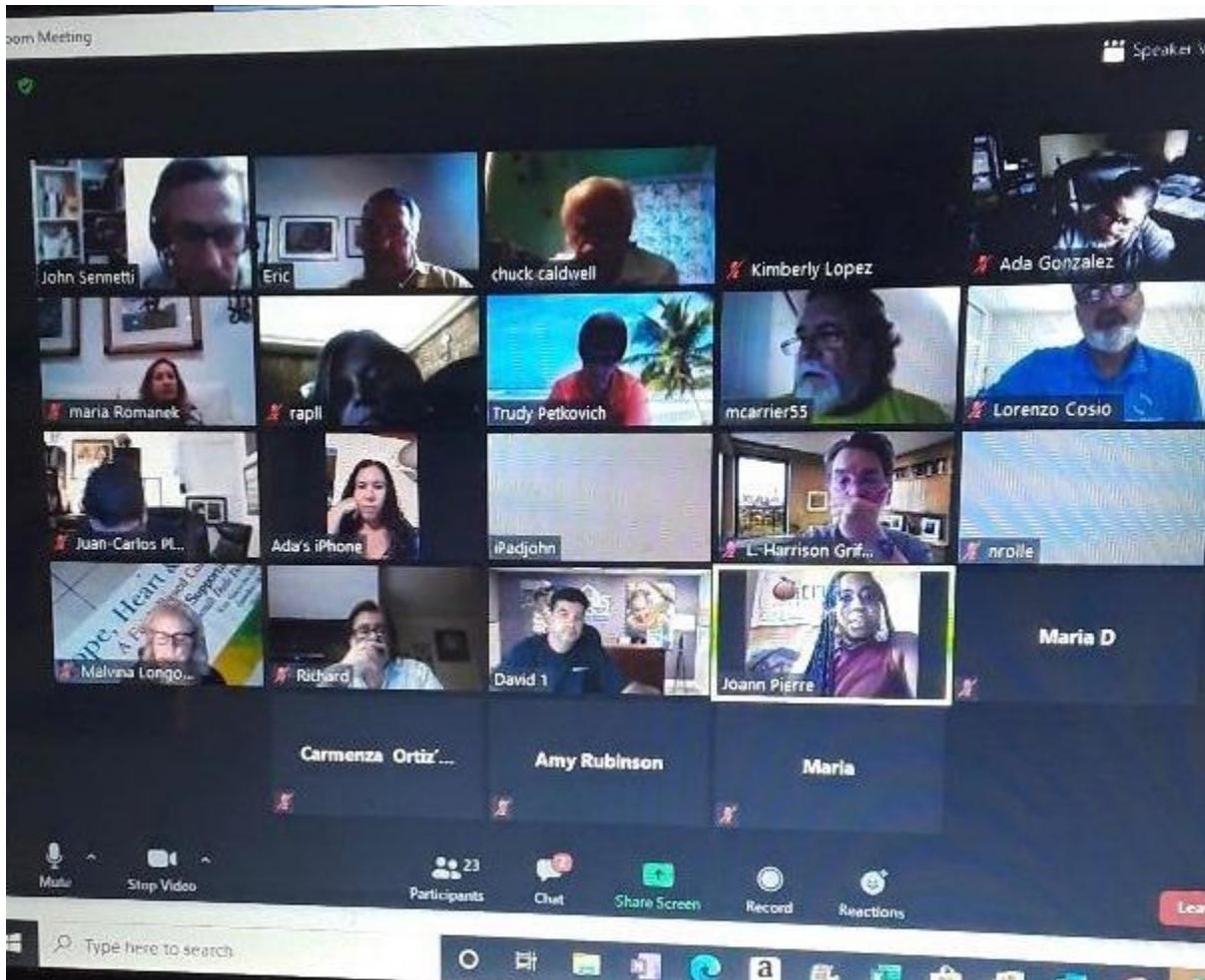
President of the *South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association* (a HHH partner) **Denise Beeman-Sasiain**, introduced Mott as someone who is "paying it back" every day with the youth he works with. "I was fortunate," Mott related. "Before my mother passed away and I ended up in foster care, I was grounded in my faith. Because children in foster care change homes so many times (65% move 7 times or more), they don't get a chance to connect to anyone or anything. And without a connection, many are lost."

"That connection could be something as simple as receiving a backpack," Mott went on to explain. "A simple gesture of love means so much to a child starved for attention." Mott's *Youth Advisory Council* conducted a study that found that college students who come out of foster care *with a connection to someone* achieve higher grades than those without such a relationship. "Working with a mentor - from a faith-based organization like yours - would make a world of difference to our youth!"

DeMarco made a "connection" with HHH - he received a "virtual standing ovation" after his talk. Discussions are now underway to create a Mentor Program with Mott's students, spearheaded by HHH's Dr. **John Gentile**, Attorney **Harrison Griffis**, and Dr. **John Sennetti**.

Attendees included Luis and Mary Andujas (GAL), Ada Avallone (GAL), Richard Candia, Mike Carrier, Chuck Caldwell, Lorenzo Cosio (GAL), Maria DeWitt (GAL) John Gentile, Ada Gonzalez, Harrison Griffis, Maria Jacques (GAL), Malvi Longoria (GAL), Carmenza Ortiz, Rosie Perez-Lacayo, Alex Planas (GAL), Fred Romanek, Maria Romanek, Elizabeth Romanek, Denise Beeman-Sasiain, Eric Schwindeman (GAL), and John Sennetti (GAL) with St. Louis newcomers John Hoffman and Jose Umana. (see photo below)

Thank you, DeMarco, for energizing our HHH volunteers!



HOPE, HEART & HOME
HOSTS
NEW PARTNER

The Children's Trust



HHH Child Advocates heard an uplifting talk from the President & CEO of *The Children's Trust*, **James Haj**, last Monday night at the ministry's September monthly "virtual" meeting. *Thirty-six volunteers* (!), including 14 Guardians ad Litem, heard Haj outline the *Trust's* mission to partner with the community to plan, to advocate for, and fund strategic investments that improve the lives of children in foster care - all children and their families- in Miami-Dade County.

Haj explained that *The Children's Trust* is the largest funder of after-school, youth enrichment, and summer camp programs in Miami-Dade County. He outlined the wide range of resources the *Trust* offers including parenting programs, quality early learning, health and nutrition classes, services for children with special needs, and youth employment. Haj and HHH Director, Eric Schwindeman, plan to partner on future collaborative events, including the *Miami Heart Gallery* which is an on-line multi-media exhibit featuring children in Miami-Dade County who are eligible for adoption.

Hope, Heart & Home looks forward to a long-term relationship with *The Children's Trust* as they join forces to support children in foster care. *The Trust* will join HHH partners *Voices For Children, Citrus Family Care Network, Youth Advisory Council, Florida Foster Care Review, His House, and South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association*.

Attendees included **Yohandra Acosta** (and her three foster children), **Ada Avallone** (GAL), **Jenny Ardila**, **Chuck Caldwell**, **Richard Candia**, **Martha Pomares Candia** (GAL), **Mike Carrier**, **Lou Confessore**, **Lo Cosio** (GAL), **Daniella DeWitt** (GAL), **Maria DeWitt** (GAL), **John Gentile**, **Priscilla Greear**, **Harrison Griffis**, **Mary Hamel**, **Karen Kerr** (GAL), **Maria Jacques** (GAL), **Donovan Lee-Sin**, **Ben Morales**, **Carmenza Ortiz**, **Joann Pierre** (GAL), **Alex Planas** (GAL), **Trudy Petrovich**, **Nadine Rolle**; **Maria**, **Fred**, and **Elizabeth Romanek**; **John Sennetti** (GAL), **Alexander Schwindeman**, **Stefan Schwindeman**, **Eric Schwindeman**, (GAL), **Valerie Van Ostran** (GAL), **Vivian Uchdorf** (GAL), **Wieland Uchdorf** (GAL), and **Willmeisha**. Many thanks to **Dr. John Sennetti** and **Elizabeth Romanek** (7th grade expert) for their technical assistance on our Zoom call.

HHH's next virtual meeting will be held on Monday, October 12 @ 7 PM, featuring Guest Speaker: St. Louis activist and HHH Leader, **Lorenzo Cosio**.

HHH is currently recruiting Child Advocates to serve children in foster care from the *South Dade Deanery* of the *Archdiocese of Miami* as Foster Parents, Respite Parents, Guardians ad Litem, Mentors for college students aging out of foster care, and Panelists for case review panels.

Interested volunteers should contact Eric Schwindeman: eschwindeman@yahoo.com

Visit our Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/ministryHHH/>





HOPE, HEART & HOME TEAMS UP WITH CITRUS, YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL, AND GUARDIAN AD LITEM HHH-YAC MENTORING PROGRAM

A college student that ages out of foster care faces innumerable challenges – in school and in life. “Where do I live, how do I eat, can I survive the “college experience?” are frequently asked questions. Fortunately, studies have shown that such students who are connected to a “mentor,” are much more likely to stay in school, get better grades, and actually graduate with a degree. They are better adjusted, find and keep better jobs, and succeed in their career choices. Mentors can truly make a difference in these teenagers’ lives.

A foster success story and leader of the *Citrus FCN Youth Advisory Council* (YAC), **DeMarco Mott** saw the virtues of a mentor early on in his college years. Once introduced to HHH, he recognized an immediate opportunity to improve the fortunes of the teens he worked with at YAC. HHH Director, **Eric Schwindeman** – himself an adopted foster child, a former history professor, and marketing executive – jumped at the chance to utilize his resource of ministry volunteers in creating a Mentoring Program with Mott to address this need.

Working with **Marcel Rivas**, Director of Youth Service and Adoption Operations at *Citrus* and **Cindy Bobadilla**, Training and Development Manager for the *11th Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program*, the *HHH YAC Mentoring Program* began to take shape. Together, this team formulated new Mentoring procedures. HHH’s **Dr. John Sennetti** (GAL) and **Dr. John Gentile** designed a new application. HHH agreed to check all applicant references, *Citrus* will conduct all fingerprinting and background checks, and the *Guardians* will administer a training program for the new Mentors.

Consideration will be given to existing GALs with security clearance and to Mentors who want to become GALs. The framework outlined in the new partnership’s “Scope of Service” memorandum will be completed by month’s end and will ultimately streamline the on-boarding process for this new pilot program.

Fourth Quarter 2020 ***Hope, Heart & Home Events***

Food For Foster Families - Sat. October 17



HHH to partner with *Citrus FCN, One More Child*, and the *Foster Parent Peer Advocates* to feed foster families, many struggling during this current crisis to make ends meet. Boxes of food customized for each family's needs will be distributed in a "drive-by" pick-up. HHH Volunteers are needed to sign-up NOW. Please email Eric Schwindeman eschwindeman@yahoo.com if you are interested.
Location: St. John Neumann Parking Lot
Time: 2 to 3:30 PM Masks Available.

Toys For Tots Christmas Drive-By *Saturday. December 5 2 PM to 3:30 PM* ***St. John Neumann - front of Resurrection Hall***



Once again, ***Hope, Heart & Home*** is teaming up this holiday season with the *South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (SFFAPA)* to bring joy to hundreds of children in foster care of all ages. This will be another *Minette Rivero - Mike Carrier Production*. All registered families will have pre-assigned boxes of presents. Assisted this year by Co-Chairperson, Carmenza Ortiz, Mike will be signing-up HHH Child Advocates for this event. Contact Mike at micarrier55@gmail.com or Carmenza at Ortiz.carmenza@yahoo.com

HHH SPOTLIGHT: MEET ELIZABETH ROMANEK
Hope, Heart & Home's YOUNGEST CHILD ADVOCATE

When this 12 year-old seventh grader isn't mugging for the Zoom camera, she is sharing her bright smile and tenderness with a foster child her family has taken in. Young Elizabeth Romanek is a regular feature of HHH's monthly virtual meetings. "She always finishes her homework early so she can join the call," her mother Maria Romanek explains. "She wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Fred and Maria Romanek came to a *Hope, Heart & Home* meeting last fall, determined to adopt a foster child. Elizabeth insisted on coming along. "I want a baby sister!" she told attendees at the meeting. "Can you make that happen?" Through HHH, her parents applied to *Citrus Family Care Network* and were accepted in the *PRIDE* (Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education) training classes. The Romanek family "graduated" last June.

Elizabeth made sure the extra bedroom in her house was ready for a new arrival. She and her mother filled the room with books and toys Elizabeth had saved, unknowingly, for this very moment. "I wanted it to be perfect!" she told her father. In case they were asked to foster an infant, the family labored to assemble a new crib. "Some assembly required" Fred Romanek grinned. "What a mission!" But Elizabeth made certain it all came together.

Late one night in August, the phone rang. It was DCF asking Maria if they could care for a little three-year old girl temporarily. When they picked her up the next day, Elizabeth finally had her baby sister. "She practically took over caring for this little girl," her mother proudly related. While the little girl had her own room and her own bed, she was soon curling up in Elizabeth's bed in the middle of the night. That was fine with Elizabeth.

Later that month they received another late-night call. The Romanek's were asked to take in a nine-year old girl. "Absolutely yes!" was the family's response. And so, Elizabeth's second little sister arrived. They hit it off that night and were up talking for hours. For the rest of her stay, the two girls played, cooked, talked, watched tv, and even sang together. "They laughed and cried and made memories. They were inseparable and grew up a little bit with each other's love," Maria said.

"I want to see more kids in happy homes," Elizabeth told her classmates. "Why doesn't *your* family help some child without a family," she asked. Elizabeth has made it her passion to see more kids fostered and adopted in her neighborhood. She plans to distribute HHH and Citrus literature in her classroom when it reopens this fall. "Show this to your parents! Help these kids!" she implores her friends. As a result, her mother has gotten inquiries from other parents and has referred them to *Citrus*.

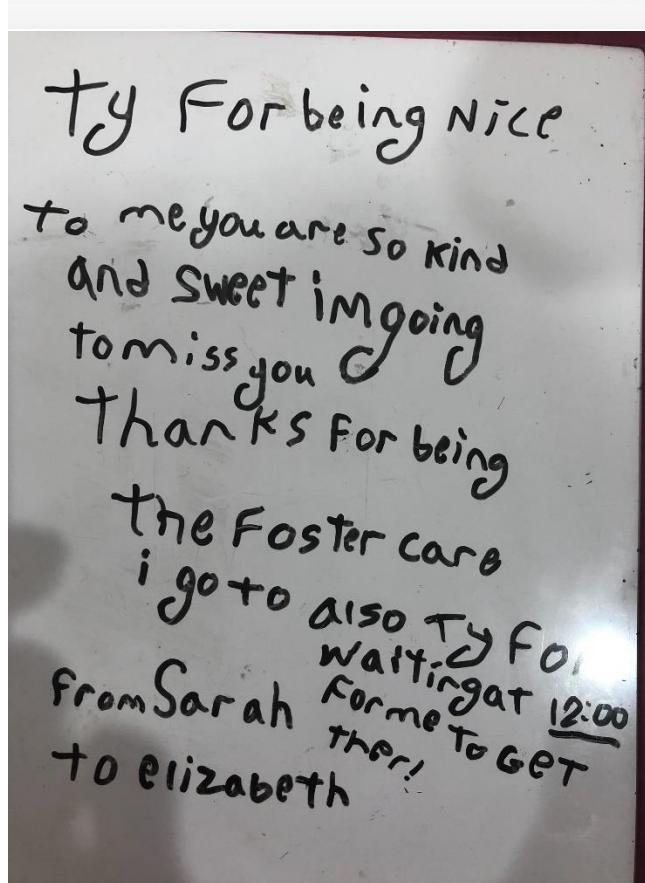
The Romanek's have temporarily cared for two little girls now. One of them left Elizabeth a note when she left. "Thank you for being so sweet and kind," the note read.

Our sentiments exactly.

foster parenting

(verb)

1. loving whomever is entrusted for however long they are entrusted; standing in the gap.
2. risking the protection of one's heart for the protection of a child.





The Romanek Family: Fred, Elizabeth, and Maria with *Citrus FCN*'s Marta Torres (left) and *Hope, Heart & Home*'s Project Director Eric Schwindeman (back). The family labored all day to help hand out 175 backpacks to foster and adoptive families at the drive-by event held at ***St. John Neumann Catholic Church*** on August 8.

Next HHH Virtual Meeting: Monday, October 12 @ 7 PM. Invite a Friend!

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