

*HOPE, HEART & HOME*

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2022

NEWSLETTER



*HOPE, HEART & HOME* recruits for **6** opportunities to support children in foster care:

(1) **FOSTER PARENTS**

Children entering foster care due to child abuse, neglect, or abandonment need quality foster families to provide safe, nurturing, and loving homes where they can thrive and feel they belong. These children need support, comfort, and guidance during this difficult time in their lives. Foster parenting can be a short or long term commitment. *Citrus* provides *CARE* classes for interested parents.

(2) **RESPITE PARENTS**

Foster parents often need “breaks” during their time caring for children. Respite Parents provide that break by temporarily caring for children in their homes for short periods of time. Anyone interested in becoming a respite parent completes the same *CARE* training with *Citrus* that full-time foster parents go through.

(3) **GUARDIAN AD LITEM**

These same children also need court-appointed *Guardian ad Litem (GAL)* to advocate for their best interests in dependency court procedures. Guardians make sure children are not lost in over-burdened legal and social service systems or languish in an inappropriate home or shelter. The *Guardians* require 30 hours of training, including on-line study and courtroom observation.

(4) **MENTORS**

Teenage children “age-out” of dependent care at age 18. Studies have shown that teens who connect with a volunteer mentor achieve better grades, achieve higher graduation rates, and find better jobs. HHH Mentors will assist high school and college students navigate their way through college entrance, curriculum, “life questions,” and career paths. Extensive training and background checks required.

(5) **PANELISTS**

*Florida Foster Care Review* conducts review sessions of pending cases before the Children’s Court. They interview, screen, and train panelists to serve on civilian review “roundtables.” Panelists serve one full day a month.

(6) **CAREPORTAL NETWORKING**

HHH needs Child Advocates to volunteer to help meet the specific needs of local foster families posted on the CarePortal platform. Anyone from 19 to 90 can join!

HHH meets the second Monday of every month.





## HOPE, HEART & HOME CALENDAR



SATURDAY  
10 AM

### FOSTERING & ADOPTIVE SUMMIT

Virtual Meeting - Registration required



MONDAY

Start of *Foster Family Appreciation Week*

"GALentine's Day!"

**TEDDY BEAR DRIVE** @ Holy Rosary-St. Richards



TUESDAY 7 PM

*Hope, Heart & Home* Monthly Virtual Meeting

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Alecia Rodriguez**



WEDNESDAY  
3 PM - 6 PM

*1st Annual ICE CREAM FESTIVAL for FOSTER FAMILIES*

@ **CRY BABY CREAMERY** 17379 US 1 Palmetto Bay



MONDAY  
7 PM

*Hope, Heart & Home* Monthly Virtual Meeting

Guest Speaker: **Maria Pia De Castro** - *First Star Academy*



WEDNESDAY 10 AM

### EXPLORE FOSTER MIAMI



### SPRING STAKEHOLDERS BREAKFAST



*Coming Attraction:*

Monday 7 PM

### FR. JOSE ALFARO

Dean, South Dade Deanery  
Pastor, St. John Neumann



# *HOPE, HEART & HOME*

## Kicks-Off *Fourth Year* Supporting Children in Foster Care

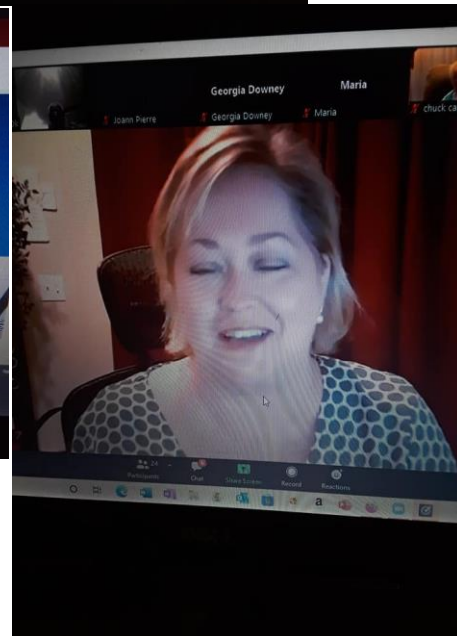
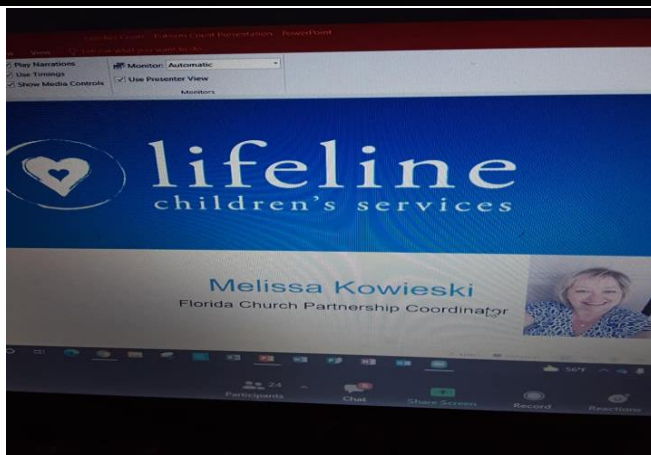
Thirty-One Child Advocates

**Remember** *Maria DeWitt*

**Honor** *Mary J. Walton*

**Hear** *Melissa Kowieski*

### *LIFELINE CHILDREN'S SERVICES*



*Hope, Heart & Home* launched 2022 as another year of service to children in foster care last Monday night (January 10) with a highly emotional yet educational monthly virtual meeting.



Thirty-one Child Advocates paid tribute to **Maria Dewitt**, of one of the ministry's founding members, who passed away suddenly last month at the age of 62. Child Advocates, **Chuck Caldwell**, **Lorenzo Cosio** (GAL), and **Maria Jacques** (GAL) offered prayers for Maria's family and shared anecdotes about Maria's dedication and passion for children in the child welfare system. She will be greatly missed. The ministry started a collection to gift to Maria's daughter **Danielle** (GAL) and son **Justin**. Maria and Danielle (left) made a great team!

The group also honored long-time friend, guest speaker, and Guardian ad Litem leader, **Mary J. Walton**, who retired in December after 20+ years as a GAL volunteer and manager. We look forward to her continued participation in HHH meetings and events.

The Florida Church Partnership Coordinator for *Lifeline Children's Services*, **Melissa Kowieski** was the evening's featured speaker. She introduced her organization's services, designed to prevent family separation and how churches can play a large role in providing the training to re-unite or keep families together.

Joining the call were **Lynda Arostequi** (HHH Mentor), **Ada Avallone** (GAL), **Lorenzo Cosio** (GAL), **Harriet Confessore**, **Lou Confessore** (St. Catherine's), **Mike Carrier**, **Chuck Caldwell**, **Georgia Downey** (*Explore Foster Miami*), **Karen Franklin**, **John Gentile** (CarePortal), **Harrison Griffis**, **Rosalyn Hagley**, **Maria Jacques** (GAL), **DK Knox**, **Joy Knox**, **Trudy Petkovich** (Citrus QPI), **Joann Pierre** (GAL), **Lauren Purba** (HHH Web Design), **Alecia Rodriquez** (GAL, Mentor), **Nadine Rolle** (Citrus), **Scott Scovel** (HHH Mentor), **Stefan Schwindeman** (Technical Advisor), **Alexander Schwindeman**, **Eric Schwindeman** (GAL, Mentor), **Vivian Uchdorf** (GAL), **Wieland Uchdorf** (GAL), **Monica Vega**, **Valerie Van Ostran** (GAL, CarePortal), and **Mary J. Walton** (GAL),







## Nelson Hincapie Named New Executive Director of Miami Dade College Foundation

**Miami, Jan. 18, 2022** – **Nelson Hincapie**, a proud **Miami Dade College** (MDC) alumnus, has been named the new executive director of the MDC Foundation, which raises essential private funds to support scholarships, academic programs and services to change the lives of MDC students, families and communities through the transformational opportunity of education.

Most recently, Hincapie served as President and CEO of *Voices for Children* Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit that provides financial assistance and resources to abused, abandoned and neglected children. During his time at Miami-Dade County, he led the successful statewide campaign for Universal Pre-K, which guarantees high-

quality pre-kindergarten education for every four-year-old child in Florida.

Hincapie serves *The Children's Trust* first appointed by Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez and re-appointed by Mayor Daniella Levine Cava in 2020, where he currently serves on the Executive Committee and is Vice Chair of the Bylaws Ad-Hoc Committee. He has served as the Chair of the Community Based Organization Advisory Committee, created by Miami-Dade County Commissioners.

In 2018, Hincapie, along with *St. John Neumann* parishioner Eric Schwindeman, helped found a multi-parish outreach program to support children in foster care called **HOPE, HEART & HOME**. As the first such effort in the Archdiocese of Miami, their team started recruiting volunteers from three churches to become foster parents and Guardian ad Litem. Expanding to 11 parishes and now recruiting respite parents, mentors, panelists, and donors for a new platform called CarePortal, Hincapie encouraged *Hope, Heart & Home* to continue their efforts through the pandemic with virtual meetings and his leadership was instrumental in their success in the community.

Hincapie is an MDC alumnus and Kellogg Executive Scholar. He earned a bachelor's degree in public administration from Florida International University. Throughout his professional career, he has received numerous awards including the Florida Commendation Medal from the Florida National Guard in 2020.

Founded in 1965, the MDC Foundation raises essential private funds to support scholarships, academic programs and support services so MDC students have the opportunity to pursue their dreams. The MDC Foundation also supports world-class arts and cultural programming at MDC that enriches the community. Known as Democracy's College, MDC changes lives through accessible, high-quality teaching and learning experiences that prepare students for tomorrow's workforce. MDC is the nation's largest, campus-based institution of higher education with an enrollment of more than 165,000 students and more than two million alumni. MDC ranks highest in the state and third in the nation in providing its students economic mobility. It is also the nation's top producer of Associate in Arts and Science degrees and awards more degrees to minorities than any other college or university in the country. [Visit mdcfoundation.com](http://mdcfoundation.com).

January 24, 2022

# HOPE E-News

Miami Law's Public Interest Newsletter

## A Note from HOPE

Keep warm, this morning, Miami Law students! As you will see in this week's edition of HOPE e-news, there are a number of exciting programs and projects in motion. We encourage you to join for meetings with leading attorneys and learn about the many ways in which you can develop your lawyering skills in partnership with advocacy organizations. Don't forget to take a look at the Florida Bar Challenge and find the case you will be working on! This is a wonderful opportunity to be paired with South Florida lawyers and make a difference through pro bono advocacy. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to let us know! Note that the challenge is across all Florida law schools and we look forward to bringing home a trophy with your help! Make it a wonderful week and keep safe and healthy!

Sincerely,  
DL and The HOPE Team

## HOPE Dates to Remember

**January 31st - March 25th:** FL Bar Foundation Pro Bono Challenge  
**January 31st | 12:30 pm:** Florida Justice Center and Justice Impact Alliance Workshop (Virtual)  
**February 4th | 1:00 pm:** Navigating Microaggressions Workshop (Virtual)  
**February 9th | 12:30 pm:** Student-to-Student Public Interest Opportunities Fair (Virtual)  
**February 14th | 12:00 pm:** HOPE Summer Applications Due

## What's In This Issue?

### 2-HOPE EVENTS

### 3-6 - PUBLIC INTEREST PATHWAYS, PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

### 7-8-GET CONNECTED, COMMUNITY SERVICE, HOPE SPOTLIGHT, MEDIA RECS & QUOTE OF THE WEEK

## How To Reach Us

UMHOPE@LAW.MIAMI.EDU

(305) 284-2399

DEAN MARNI LENNON, DIRECTOR:

MLENNON@LAW.MIAMI.EDU/954-482-3522

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DETRA DAVIS FLEMING, OFFICE MANAGER:

DDAVIS@LAW.MIAMI.EDU

HOPE Connects: Virtual and In-Person

every Tuesday and Thursday at 12:30 pm

## Get Connected

### Miami Law Clinics Information Sessions

Mark your calendar to learn more about our clinics and how to apply for 2022-2023! For more information, visit <https://www.law.miami.edu/academics/clinics/clinics-how-to-apply>.

### Immigration Clinic

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

### Human Rights Clinic

Thursday, February 3, 2022

### Innocence Clinic

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

### Investor Rights Clinic

Thursday, February 10, 2022

### Tenant Rights Clinic

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

### Children & Youth Law Clinic

Thursday, February 17, 2022

### Startup Clinic

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

### Environmental Justice Clinic

Thursday, February 24, 2022

### Health Rights Clinic

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

### Bankruptcy Clinic

Tuesday, March 3, 2022

**HOPE, HEART & HOME** thanks UM Law Dean

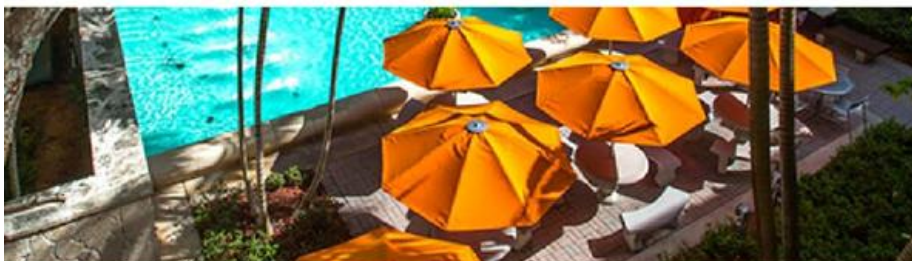
Marni Lennon for including our licensed Mentoring Program in the January 24 HOPE E-News "community service options" for UM law students interested in supporting teens aging out of foster care. We have already fielded dozens of inquiries about our program!

## Community Service

### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

VITA volunteers assist with basic tax returns for individuals who are low-income, disabled, non-English speaking and elderly. If you are interested in participating in the VITA program, please email [umhope@law.miami.edu](mailto:umhope@law.miami.edu) to request a list of agency partners in the community. You may then reach out directly to the agency of your choice to request information about training and scheduling. Tax assistance takes place from late January through April.

**HOPE, HEART & HOME MINISTRY** was created to oversee a recruiting effort in the South Dade Deanery of the Archdiocese of Miami to support a coalition of child advocate groups committed to serve foster care in Miami, including Citrus Family Care Network, Guardian ad Litem, Voices For Children, Educate Tomorrow, Florida Foster Care Review, Children's Trust, Kristi House, His House, South Florida Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, One More Child, and The Citrus FCN Youth Advisory Board (YAC). Seeking Mentors: Teenage children "age-out" of dependent care at age 18. Studies have shown that teens who connect with a volunteer mentor achieve better grades, achieve higher graduation rates, and find better jobs. HHH Mentors will assist high school and college students navigate their way through college entrance, curriculum, "life questions," and career paths. Extensive training and background check required. Please email [eschwindeman@yahoo.com](mailto:eschwindeman@yahoo.com) for more information.



HOPE

HOPE E-NEWS

7





# valentine's drive

## LOVE PACKAGES

HRSR Church in partnership with Citrus Family Care Network and Hope, Heart, and Home, is hosting a drive to benefit children in Foster Care

Love packages consist of:  
a decorated bag or box  
containing:

- A Teddy Bear
- A Blanket for the child
- A Prayerful Note
- Any additional Valentine treat.

*Be creative*

*"Do everything in love."  
1 Corinthians 16:14*



*Students will receive*  
5 service hours per package

**NO LIMIT**

**Drop off at the  
Parish Office**

**JAN 26 - FEB 21**

**Monday-Thursday**

**8:30 AM- 4:30 PM**

 **Citrus**  
Family Care Network

**HOPE, HEART & HOME**

**HOLY ROSARY-ST. RICHARD CHURCH  
7500 SW 152ND STREET, PALMETO BAY, FL 33157  
305-233-8711**





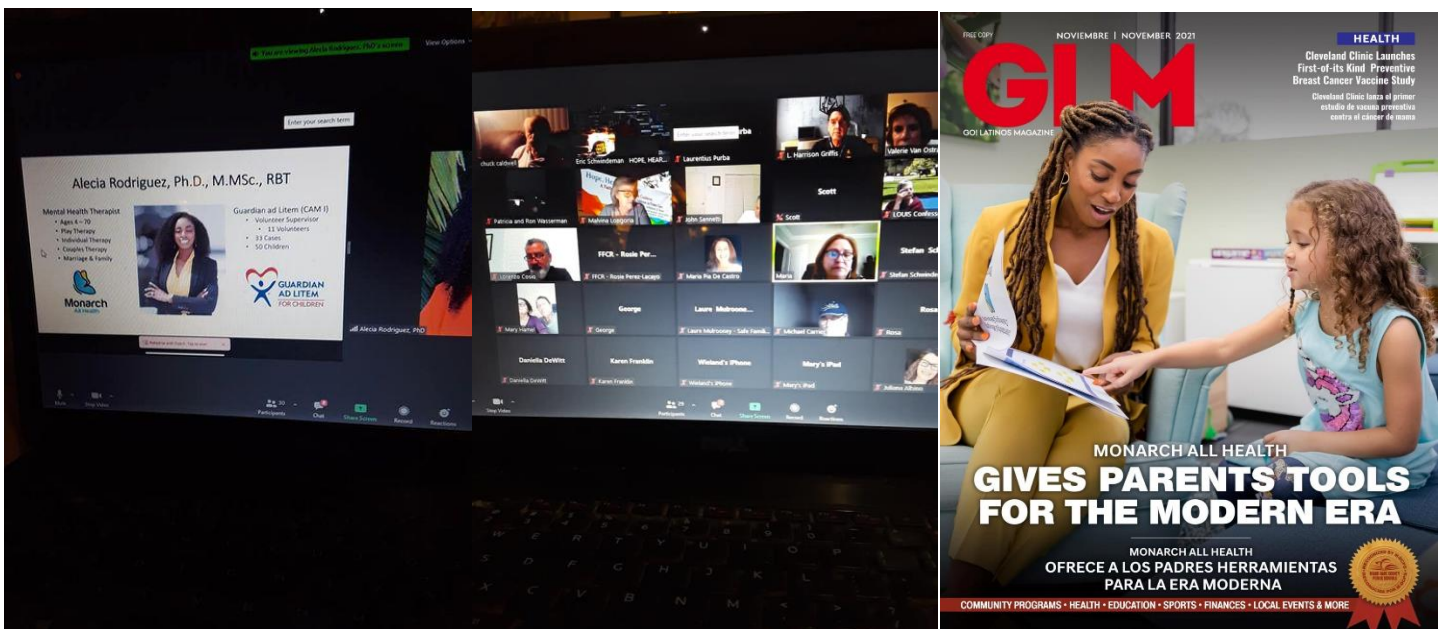
**FOSTER FAMILY APPRECIATION WEEK** got off to a glorious start 2/14 with the *Holy Rosary- St Richard Valentine Drive for Foster Kids*. Hundreds of bags of bears, blankets, and wonderful gifts of love were donated by HRSR parishioners to be delivered to children in foster care with **HOPE, HEART & HOME** partners, *Citrus FCN* and *Catholic Charities*. Many thanks to **Marylou Rodriguez** and her team from HRSR and to HHH's **Rosie Perez Lacayo** for loading up her car to transport the bags to Palmetto Bay for distribution at *Cry Baby Creamery Ice Cream Festival* 2/16. (where HHH Operations Manager **Mike Carrier** set up). Tremendous job by all involved!

# HOPE, HEART & HOME

February 15 VIRTUAL MEETING

## DR. ALECIA RODRIGUEZ

Child Advocate *Extraordinaire*  
*Shares A Night of Hope*  
*With Our HHH Community*



**HOPE, HEART & HOME** was blessed to host **Dr. Alecia Rodriguez** at our February 15 Monthly Virtual Meeting. 40 Child Advocates heard Alecia's amazing story of her rise from the ranks of the child welfare system to success as a stand-out athlete, Mom, runway model, PhD in behavioral therapy, Guardian ad Litem manager, HHH Mentor, AND soon-to-be Foster Parent.

Alecia's history of overcoming life's challenges, balancing time commitments to family, work, and study AND altruistic pursuits as a Guardian, Teacher, Mentor, and Lecturer. She is an example for all! Thank you, Alecia, for an uplifting night of hope!

Child Advocates that enjoyed Dr. Rodriguez's talk included **Mike Carrier, Harriet Confessore, Lou Confessore, Harrison Griffis, David Hamel, Mary Hamel (GAL), Juliana Albino, Didi DeWitt (GAL), Chuck Caldwell, and Karen Franklin (Panelist).**



Also **Lo Cosio** (GAL), **Maria Jacques** (GAL), **Malvi Longoria** (GAL), **Laure Mulrooney**, **Rosie Perez-Lacayo** (Panelist), **Maria Pia DeCastro**, **Lauren Purba**, **Maria Romanek** (Foster Family), **Elizabeth Romanek** (Foster Family), **Stefan Schwindeman**, **Alexander Schwindeman**, **Eric Schwindeman** (GAL, Mentor), **Scott Scovel** (Mentor), **Monica Vega**, **Mary J. Walton** (GAL), **Vivian Uchdorf** (GAL), **Wieland Uchdorf** (GAL), **John Sennetti**, **Valerie Van Ostran** (GAL), **Patricia Wasserman** (Foster Family), **Ron Wasserman** (Foster Family), **Gabriela Wasserman** (Foster Family), **Trudy Petkovich**, and **Danielle Yost**.

HHH welcomed newcomers **George Resigno** (Little Flower), Alecia's husband **Mohashie Rodriguez**, her Mentee, **Danielle Steenkamer**, and **Rosa Waters** (Mentor candidate).





*HOPE, HEART & HOME'S*  
**1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL**

# ICE CREAM FESTIVAL

## FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

with partners **CITRUS FCN**, **Holy Rosary- St. Richard**, and *Cry Baby Creamery*.



60 Foster Family Members  
Devour *Cry Baby Creamery*

# ICE CREAM







Everything came together February 16 under the watchful eyes of **Monica Vega** (*Cry Baby*), **Mike Carrier** (HHH), **Joann Pierre** (*Citrus*), and **Rosie Perez Lacayo** (*HRSR*).

Sixty family members left *Cry Baby Creamery* with *Citrus* toys, *Holy Rosary-St Richard's* gift bags, and hundreds of ice cream scoops (with toppings, of course). Can't ask for a better day! And all before dinner!

Many thanks to *Cry Baby Creamery's* Operations Manager and HHH volunteer, **Monica Vega** for organizing & hosting this event. Best ice cream in Dade County, folks! Seriously, you have to try it!

Special thanks to **Citrus' Marta Torres, Nadine Rolle, Trudy Petkovich, Shaena Wan, Kimberly Lopez**, and the *Citrus Recruitment & Retention Teams*! And the HHH Volunteers who worked this event: **Mike Carrier, John Gentile, David Hamel, Maria Jacques, Joann Pierre, Rosie Perez Lacayo, Alexander Schwindeman, Stefan Schwindeman, Eric Schwindeman** and **Danielle Yost**. You made the day a success!









February 27, 2022

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thank you

Thank you

valentine's drive  
LOVE PACKAGES



With your help we were able to put a smile on the faces of 150 refugee minors, foster children, and children in need.

MAY GOD REWARD YOUR GENEROSITY



HOPE, HEART & HOME



Wonderful "thank-you" appeared in the Sunday Feb 27 *Holy Rosary - St. Richards* parish bulletin. **HOPE, HEART & HOME** collaborated with HRSR, Citrus FCN, and Catholic Charities to collect and deliver 150 Valentine gift bags to children in foster care. Thank you, Marylou Rodriguez, **Father Daniel Houde**, Shaena Wan, and **Rosie Perez Lacayo** for all your efforts!



## “RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS” CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

*HOPE, HEART & HOME* combined two projects Wednesday when they hosted 60 foster family Members at *Cry Baby Creamery* for an “Ice Cream Festival” AND their **RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS** Campaign by presenting their “adopted” families with gift bags and cards at the event. Everybody went home happy!

HHH's [Maria A. Mejia Jacques](#) shown here with a presentation to a new recipient, **the Roy Family**, whose mom cares for four children, aged 4 to 7.

Maria followed up this gift with a surprise visit on March 29 to their home in Cutler Ridge, delivering a basket of goodies and toys to the family.

This initiative that HHH started last December, will continue through 2022 under Maria’s direction

One of the families HHH “adopted” was the **Wasserman Family**. Foster Parents **Ron & Patricia Wasserman** are always ready to open their hearts and home to children in need. After adopting two beautiful kids, they now care for a newborn, shown here with her new adoring “big sisters!”

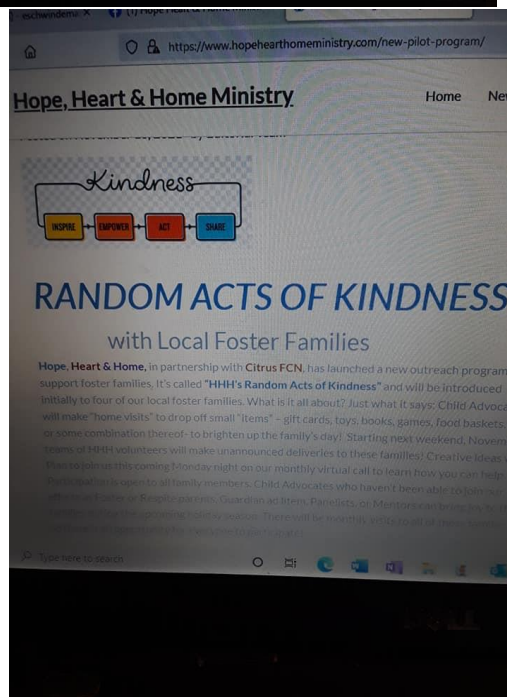
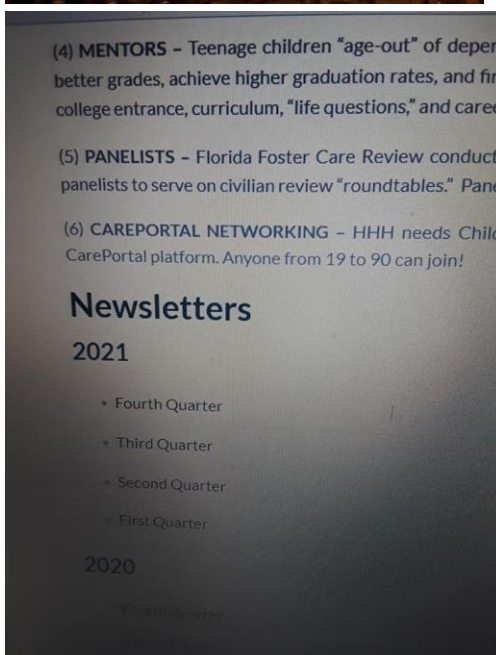
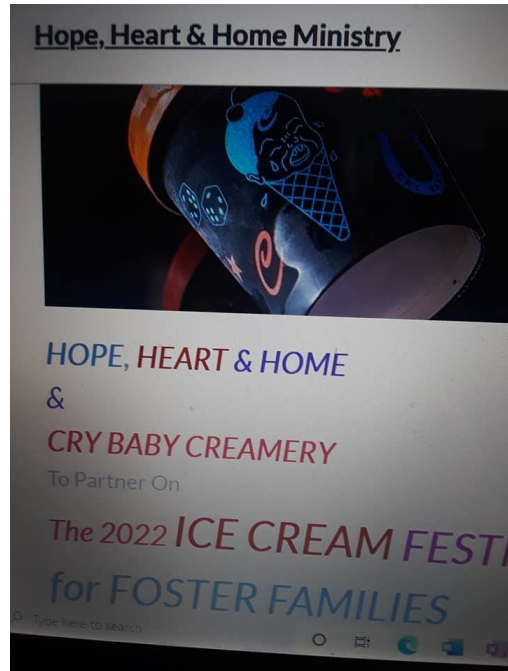
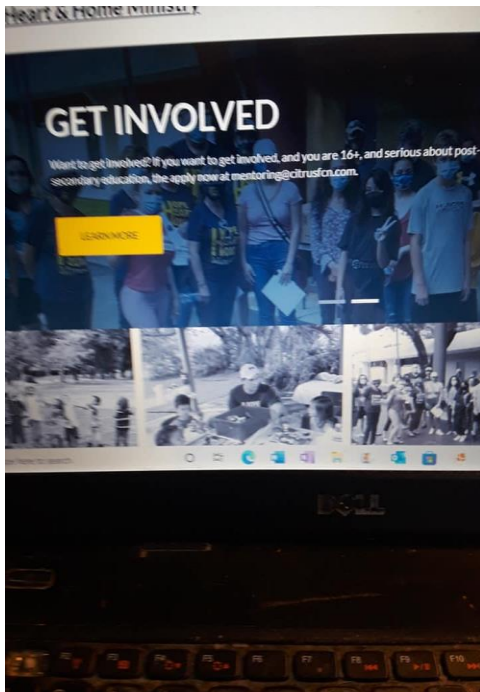
The world needs more families like the Wasserman's!





Have **YOU** Checked Out *HOPE, HEART & HOME'S*  
**NEW WEBSITE?** Click On:  
<https://www.hopeheartthomeministry.com/>

Catch up on Featured Events, Upcoming Programs, Speakers, Quarterly Newsletters, and Learn How **YOU** can help Children in Foster Care!



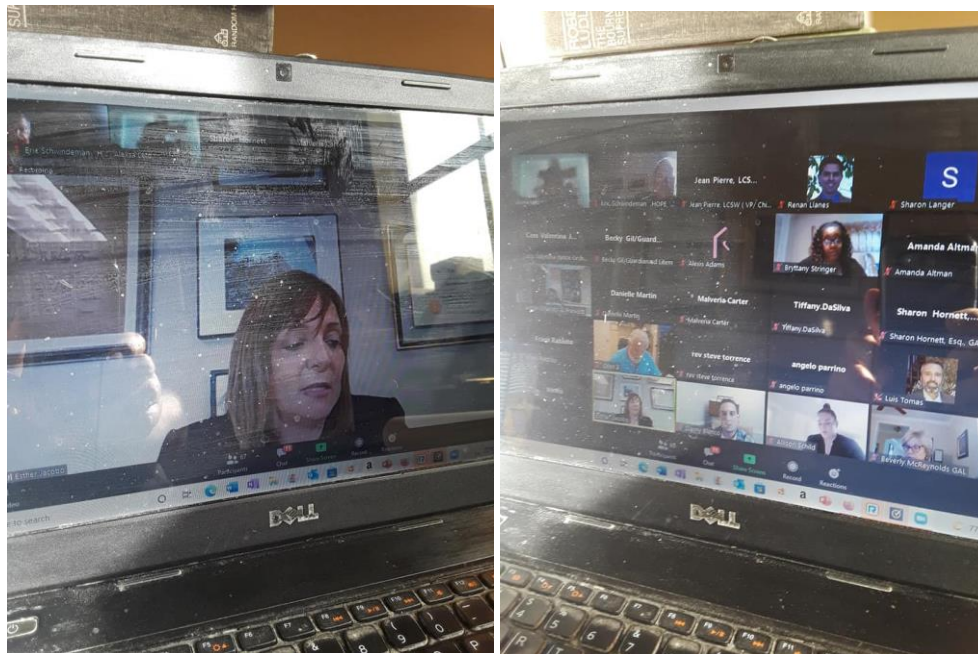
## A WIN for Miami-Dade and Monroe's Children and Families HHH Joins Effort to Preserve Service Levels

**HOPE, HEART & HOME** attended an emergency meeting of the **CBC ALLIANCE** March 3 to address the potential budget "adjustments" by the Florida House for CITRUS FCN's services to children in foster care in Dade & Monroe counties. **Maria Jacques** and **Eric Schwindeman** joined the call with 78 other stakeholders. The Alliance heard an impassioned appeal from **CITRUS' Esther Jacobo** and voted unanimously to oppose any cuts in the child welfare budget. The House and Senate conferences took up deliberations March 7.

HHH Child Advocates initiated a "write-in" campaign to House and Senate leaders. The following are sample excerpts from that effort:

*"I urge you not to support the proposed budget cuts to Citrus Family Care Network. These cuts would be devastating to the many services and programs they offer."*

*"As a Guardian Ad Litem, I am representing the most vulnerable population of foster children in our community. Citrus works with the GAL program and provides ongoing support. Cutting their budget will affect not only the number of children a caseworker has to oversee but will affect the services offered to our community and ultimately the future of our neediest children. I urge you not to support the proposed budget cuts to Citrus Family Care Network. These cuts would be devastating to the many services and programs they offer."*





*"I write to ask you to **vote no** on the Florida House's budget proposal that would result in an annual cut of more than \$17 million for Citrus Family Care Network in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties for adoption, prevention and foster care services."*

*"As an adoptive mother of two, I know how crucial support services are to adoptive parents. As a Guardian ad Litem to over 50 children, I have seen how difficult foster parenting can be and how much these foster parents need support and education. Last of all, all of us in the child welfare system can clearly see that prevention is the key, reducing support to that service would result in even more families needing services from a program that is already stretched to the max."*

*"Let's keep our children first, vote no for those who cannot vote, and show them that they matter to all of us."*

**On Tuesday, March 8, 2022 10:02 AM we got the good news!**

**"We have received notice that the Florida Legislature will NOT be cutting ANY funding from the Miami-Dade and Monroe child welfare system of care."**

The Florida House put additional dollars into their final budget proposal to more adequately fund Lead Agencies around the state without making cuts to South Florida. This is a HUGE win for our local system of care, for the system of care statewide, and for Florida's children and families.

We are **SO GRATEFUL** to all of our partners and stakeholders. You all made your voices heard by sending thoughtful and passionate letters, emails, and messages to leaders in Tallahassee to express the devastating impact that a cut would have on our community. You made a difference!

**THANK YOU** for your support and for all you do for children and families in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. "



  
**Protecting Children.  
Strengthening Families.  
Engaging Communities.**  
[www.citrusfcn.com](http://www.citrusfcn.com)  
Facebook Instagram Twitter @citrusfcn  
#FosterHopeAndLove



***HOPE, HEART & HOME'S***  
**KAREN FRANKLIN**

**Joins *Florida Foster Care* Roundtable**

***FIU*** Class of 2012 and ***MAST Academy*** graduate, **Karen Franklin**, wanted to make a difference with Miami's children in foster care. She was referred to HHH by a classmate who knew she would find a suitable venue to apply her considerable talents. Accepted in the February **FFCR** training program, Karen completed her observation and on-line classwork. She joins HHH's **Rosie Perez Lacayo** as active Panelists on the Civilian Review Roundtables which team local business professionals (Karen manages commercial properties for *I-3 Interests* in Homestead) with caseworkers, Guardian ad Litem, and other child welfare activists to assess Court-ordered therapy and unification mandates.

**Congratulations, Karen.** Welcome to the HHH / FFCR Team!







# *TECHNICAL SCHOOL OPTIONS FOR TEENS*

## Aging Out of Foster Care

### Focus of "Power Breakfast"

Hosted by **HOPE, HEART & HOME** & **CITRUS FCN** March 8

**P**artnering (l-r) was **Rudy Bustamante**, Founder & Pres. of *Magic Waste Youth Foundation*; **Liz & Alex Alvarez**, Founders of *Lucas Alvarez LA 6 Foundation*; **Eric Schwindeman**, Founder and Executive Director of *Hope, Heart & Home*; **Lorenzo Cosio**, *HHH Guardian ad Litem* (St. Louis Catholic Church); **Marcel Rivas**, Director of Youth Services & Adoption Operations for *Citrus FCN*; **Wilma Nazario** and **Meli Bustamante-Prieto** of *Magic Waste Youth Foundation*.

All participants agreed to pursue new ways to identify technical school candidates and formulate ways to support their post-secondary technical education. *The Magic Youth Foundation* will provide the perfect model for creating and awarding future scholarships by the *Alvarez Foundation*.

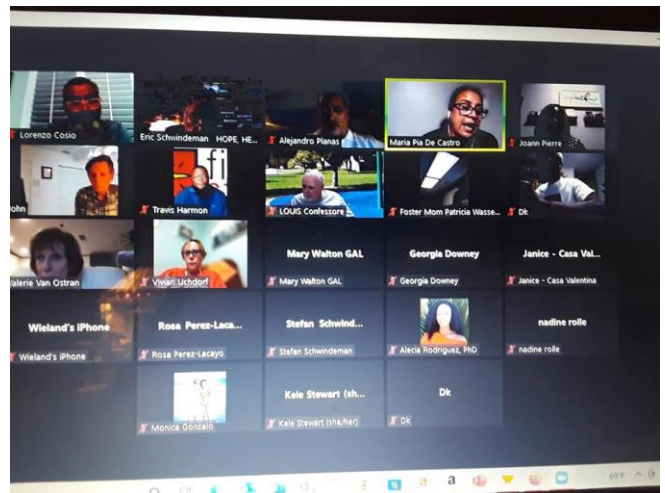
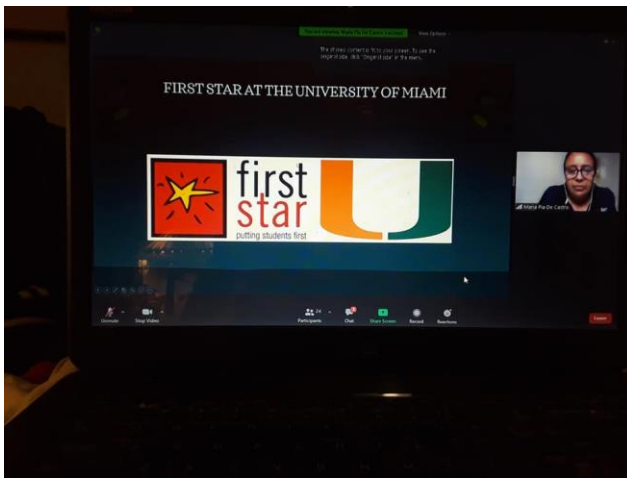


**Normalize sending kids  
to trade school after  
high school without  
making them feel like  
they're less than 4-year  
University kids.**

This collaboration was born out of an earlier exploratory breakfast between HHH's **Eric Schwindeman** and **Lorenzo Cosio** with *Lucas Alvarez LA6 Foundation's Alex Alvarez* (right) last January.







## *HOPE, HEART & HOME* hosts **Dr. Maria Pia De Castro** *FIRST STAR ACADEMY*

*HHH* welcomed **Maria Pia De Castro** of *First Star Academy* at the March 14 monthly meeting. Maria and **Travis Harmon** detailed the Academy's year-round commitment to foster youth, on & off UM campus, designed to increase teen confidence and high school graduation rates. The 27 HHH child advocates also discussed future collaboration and recruitment for the HHH Mentoring Program with *Guardian ad Litem*, *Catholic Charities*, *Casa Vallentina*, and *UM Law School* initiatives, particularly for foster teens aging out of foster care who may want to pursue a technical school education.

Joining the discussion were **Luis & Mary Andujas** (GAL -*St John Neumann*), **Lou & Harriet Confessore** (*St. Catherine's*), **Lorenzo Cosio** (GAL- *St Louis*), **Georgia Downey** (*Explore Foster Miami*), **Monica Farias** (*Catholic Charities*), **Janice Graham** (*Casa Valentina*); **Travis Harmon** (*First Star Academy*), **DK Knox** (*Little Flower*), **Rosie Perez Lacayo** (Panelist - *Holy Rosary-St. Richard*), **Joann Pierre** (GAL - *Citrus FCN*), **Alex Planas** (GAL -*St. Louis*), **Alecia Rodriguez** (GAL CAM - HHH Mentor), **Nadine Rolle** (*Citrus FCN*), **Alexander Schwindeman**, **Stefan Schwindeman**, **Eric Schwindeman** (GAL, HHH Mentor - *St. John Neumann*), **John Sennetti** (*St. Augustine*), **Kele Stewart** (*First Star Academy*), **Valerie Van Ostran** (GAL - *SJN*), **Monica Vega**, **Mary J. Walton** (GAL), **Patti & Ron Wasserman** (Foster & Adoptive Parents), **Vivian Uchdorf** (GAL -*St. Timothy*), and **Wieland Uchdorf** (GAL - *St. Timothy*).

Technical difficulties prevented fourteen of our Child Advocates from joining our video transmission. Our deepest apologies to **Juliana Albino**, **Chuck Caldwell**, **Lynda Arostegui**, **Laure Mulroney**, **Mike Carrier**, **Maria Jacques**, **Malvi Longoria**, **Meli Bustamante-Prieto**, **Rosa Waters**, **Bill Vander Wyden**, **JC Planas**, **Roselyn Hagley**, **Susan Dingler**, and **Raul Rodriguez** - all stranded in Zoom Zombieland. We promise it won't happen again!

HHH also welcomed 4 new Leaders to the Leadership Team: **Alex Planas** (GAL *St. Louis*, retired GAL CAM), **Mary K Walton**, and Foster Parents, **Patti & Ron Wasserman**. We look forward to their on-going contributions, input, and guidance as they help steer our efforts through 2022!

# *HOPE, HEART & HOME*

## **Sends Four Delegates to EXPLORE FOSTER MIAMI'S *Spring 2022 Shareholders Breakfast***



Another wonderful morning of collaboration and networking at the **EXPLORE FOSTER MIAMI** *Spring Shareholders Breakfast*, March 16. *HOPE, HEART & HOME* was recognized for their outreach programs with over 26 EFM partners. Representing HHH at the conference were **Maria Jacques** (GAL- *St. John Neumann*), **Valerie Van Ostran** (GAL- *St. John Neumann*), **Lorenzo Cosio** (GAL- *St. Louis*), and **Eric Schwindeman** (GAL, Mentor - *St. John Neumann*).



The breakfast brought together 100 Child Welfare Advocates from all over South Florida, including many HHH Meeting guest speakers: **Nelson Hincapie** (*Voices For Children*), **Esther Jacobo** (*Citrus FCN*), **Gilda Fernandez** (*DCF*), **Beatriz Lopez** (*My Florida My Family*), **Panos Kourtesis** (*CarePortal*), **Nadine Rolle** (*Citrus FCN*), **Monica Farias** (*Catholic Charities*), **Janice Graham** (*Casa Vallentina*), **Maria Pia De Castro** (*First Star Academy*), **Juliana Albino** (*Safe Families*), **Desiree Perez** (*Safe Families*), **DeMarco Mott** (*Citrus Youth Advisory Council*), **Steve Rios** (*Positive Pathways*) and **Georgia Downey** (*Explore Foster Miami*).

**Explore Foster Miami** also welcomed *Magic Waste Youth Foundation's* **Rudy Bustamante**, **Meli Bustamante-Prieto**, and **Claudia Trejos**. Rudy and Meli are pictured above left with **Georgia Downey**. Above right is *Citrus FCN's* **Esther Jacobo** & **Leslie Viega** with **Beatriz Lopez** (*DCF*).





Upper left: HHH's Valerie Van Ostran and Maria Jacques with *Safe Families*'s Juliana Albino and Cristina.

Middle Left: **Chris Lane** (NCF) receiving 40th birthday wishes from **Panos Kourtesis** (left) (*One More Child & CarePortal*) and right, **Monica Farias** (*Catholic Charities*).

Bottom left: **Melissa Meade** and **Marissa Leichter** from *Florida Foster Care Review* show off their copies of HHH 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Newsletter. HHH recruits Panelists for FFCR roundtables.



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## **HOPE, HEART & HOME** Receives **CAREPORTAL** Funding for Local Foster Families

**HOPE, HEART & HOME** was awarded funds for **CAREPORTAL** purchases at the *Explore Foster Miami Spring Shareholder Breakfast* held in the Design Center, March 16.

**Edvardo Archer**, Area Director for **CarePortal** in Florida, hands HHH **CarePortal** Administrator, **Valerie Van Ostran**, a voucher for purchasing much needed household items requested by local foster families through the **CarePortal** platform. Valerie, a parishioner at *St. John Neumann Catholic Church* in Kendall, recently organized the purchase of 9 school uniforms for a foster family in need.

Looking on at the presentation is (left) **Panos Kourtesis** of *One More Child* and HHH's Executive Director, **Eric Schwindeman** Great collaborative effort for these children!





**HOPE, HEART & HOME's** First Quarter **SPOTLIGHT** is on two of our resourceful child advocates:

## **MARIA JACQUES** and **VALERIE VAN OSTRAN**

Both are parishioners at St. John Neumann. Both are accomplished HHH Guardian ad Litem. Maria heads up the HHH “*Random Acts of Kindness Program*,” delivering gifts to 5 foster families this week. Valerie co-chairs the HHH *CarePortal Response Team* and met requests for cribs, school uniforms, gift cards, shoes, and Easter candy this week. Both spearhead our efforts to recruit foster parents and Guardian ad Litem, Maria as a family & marriage counselor and Valerie as a former head nurse practitioner. **Hope, Heart & Home** is blessed to have such dedicated leaders who have put their faith in action time and time again!

May God continue to guide these ladies in all their efforts.

Thank you, Maria and Val!

If we all do one  
random act of kindness  
daily, we just might set  
the world in the right  
direction.

Martin Kornfeld

