For Immediate Release: December 6, 2013  
Contact: Michelle Glady, Press Secretary, (850) 717-4450

DCF Kicks Off “Hope for the Holidays” Campaign  
*Holiday donations needed for local nonprofit organizations*

TALLAHASSEE—Today the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) kicks off the “Hope for the Holidays” campaign featuring 12 local nonprofit organizations across the state that help some of Florida’s most vulnerable residents. The goal: raise awareness and generate local support for these nonprofits during the holidays and beyond.

Following on the success of last year’s “Santa Cause” campaign, which made dreams come true for more than 24 children and families in Florida, DCF wanted to broaden the impact by helping organizations that help others. The impact for children and families could be exponential.

“We are fortunate to have so many nonprofit and volunteer organizations doing wonderful things in their communities to help those who need it most,” said Interim Secretary Esther Jacobo. “These groups don’t seek recognition. They simply want to make a difference. If we can help generate more support for these organizations, imagine how many more people can be helped.”

The “Hope for the Holidays” campaign features 12 nonprofits that help with everything from support for child abuse victims, to providing shelter and food for struggling families, to help for teens transitioning out of foster care, to baking birthday cakes for children still in foster care. Anyone interested in learning more is urged to review the “Hope for the Holiday” wish list and help make a wish come true.

Below are the 12 stories of these organizations along with their wish lists. Additional information can be found by visiting [www.flpartnersforpromise.com/hope.shtml](http://www.flpartnersforpromise.com/hope.shtml) or by calling the numbers listed below.
Hope for the Holidays

Northwest

Pensacola
Pathways for Change works to eradicate poverty in nearby neighborhoods by providing education, vocational training, and counseling to three area housing projects.
Website: Pathwaysforchange.org
Ideal Wish: 5 new computers – used for tutoring, online classes, job searches and family interaction
Other Needs: $2,500 tuition for Men’s Residential Treatment, bedding (twin), bibles, healthy snacks, school and art supplies, musical instruments, passenger vans, gardening supplies.
Contact: Phyllis Gonzales, 850-483-6675, or Phyllis_Gonzales@dcf.state.fl.us

Panama City
Gulf Coast Children’s Advocacy Center has worked for more than 13 years to transform the lives of victims of child abuse. We also work with families to prevent further child abuse, and comfort victims throughout the reporting and investigation stages.
Website: Gulfcoastcac.org
Ideal Wish: Toys, clothing, and shoes for children of all ages and sizes
Other Needs: Healthy snacks, school and art supplies, backpacks, hygiene items.
Contact: Jeanna Olson, 850-921-8269 or Jeanna_Olson@dcf.state.fl.us

Northeast

Bronson
The Children’s Table is an all-volunteer organization supplying 2 million plus pounds of food annually to tens of thousands of families in 11 counties with temporary emergency and supplemental food assistance for those struggling to get by.
Website: Childrenstable.org
Ideal Wish: Refurbishing of the primary storage facility ($9,000)
Other Needs: Donated food in large quantities – perishable and non-perishable, gas cards between $500-$1,000.
Contact: Janet Bente Romero, 352-494-5723 or Janet_Romero@dcf.state.fl.us

Live Oak
Love INC. is a network of local churches and volunteers across denominations working together with community organizations and government resources to provide help to the poor and needy. Love INC.’s work touches on six key areas to impact people’s lives: food, clothing, shelter, health care, life skills and family support services.
Website: Loveinc-suwanneecounty.org
Ideal Wish: Updated computer system - server/backup/software/printers ($12,000)
Other Needs: Volunteers to help with all programs and operations, donated food in large quantities – perishable and non-perishable, gas cards between $500-$1,000, new sneakers, socks, and underwear for school-aged youth.
Contact: Janet Bente Romero, 352-494-5723 or Janet_Romero@dcf.state.fl.us
Central

Orlando
BETA Center is dedicated to helping children and parents grow together by rebuilding, educating and empowering families. The BETA Center serves more than 5,000 people annually – primarily families in crisis and children in jeopardy of abuse or neglect.
Website: Betacenter.org
Ideal Wish: Clothing and toys for children of all ages.
Other Needs: Hygiene items, gift cards (stores, movies, food), and baby supplies (bottles, bibs, diapers, etc.).
Contact: Tina Marie Morgan, 407-317-7031 or Tina_Marie_Morgan@dcf.state.fl.us

Leesburg
Converge Teen Centers Inc. is a nonprofit center that provides a goal-oriented, peer group and mentoring program for local teenagers. Converge works as a collaborative partnership of several different churches, businesses and organizations that have come together in one location to provide a safe, positive, fun and free hangout for area teens. At Converge, youth enjoy games, sports and recreation FREE of charge. On average, Converge hosts approximately 100 youth during operating hours.
Website: www.facebook.com/ConvergeTC
Ideal Wish: New Video Game Systems, "E" and "T" rated video games, 32-42in flat screen TVs, electrician services
Other Needs: Volunteers, pool tables, ping-pong paddles, dodgeballs and basketballs, gym lighting, cleaning supplies, trash bags, store purchased snacks, monetary donations
Contact: Joelle Aboytes, 352-330-5512, or Joelle_Aboytes@dcf.state.fl.us

Bartow
The George W. Harris Jr. Runaway and Youth Crisis Shelter offers emergency shelter for youth experiencing abuse/neglect, homelessness, and at-risk behaviors. The primary goal of the program is to empower families and youth to address these behaviors and provide a safe transition back into the home or alternative placement. The Advisory Council supports and provides a “Cook for Kids” night, once a month where they bring in food and dine with the kids; this provides a great mentoring opportunity for the youth.
Website: Find us on Facebook
Ideal Wish: Three durable commercial picnic tables, approximately $900 each
Contact: Julia Hermelbracht, 863-519-8262 or Julia_Hermelbracht@dcf.state.fl.us
**SunCoast**

**Pinellas Park**
**Ready for Life** helps older teens in foster care prepare to live on their own. For many foster teens who leave care and don’t have help, this stage of their life can be very uncertain and scary. Some youth end up homeless, jobless or even in jail. Ready for Life works with foster youth ages 18-23, and assists them with employment readiness, education, tutoring, affordable housing, transportation, mentoring, life skills, leadership skills and so much more.
**Website:** Readyforlifepinellas.org
**Ideal Wish:** Sponsor a young adult for the holidays
**Other Needs:** Mentoring, tutoring, gift cards for food, clothing or entertainment, and monetary donations of any amount to help with food, clothing, rent, and transportation.
**Contact:** Lourdes Benedict, 727-373-7702 or Lourdes_Benedict@DCF.state.fl.us

**Tampa**
**The First Nesters** organization helps foster youth and at-risk youth establish a place to call home. The Nesters collect new and lightly used furniture and household goods, and strive to provide for each new home as we would for any of our children.
**Website:** firstnesters.org
**Idea Wish:** Donated furniture for every room, basic household goods, including kitchenware and tableware, as well as decorative items for the house.
**Other Needs:** Volunteers – pick up and deliver furniture, clean dishes and other household items, clean and/or repair upholstery, clean and sand furniture for refinishing. Monetary, tax-deductible donations are also greatly appreciated.
**Contact:** Jan Gregory, 813-337-5806 or Jan_Gregory@DCF.state.fl.us

**Tampa Bay Area**
**The Tampa Bay Burmese Council, Inc.** was established by former refugees to serve newly arriving refugees from Burma and other countries. Many refugees face cultural, vocational and communication barriers as they adjust to their new lives. The Council helps with interpretation, referrals to services, and other assistance. The Council also conducts home visits to welcome newly arriving refugee families, and provides cultural orientation. For each new family, they give a small welcome basket, including information on community resources in their language, books for the children, gift cards or small household items.
**Website:** Facebook.com/TampaBayBurmeseCouncil
**Ideal Wish:** Gift Baskets for newly arriving families-- $30 fills one basket for a family of three; $45 fills a basket for a family of four.
**Other Needs:** Office supplies for community meetings held monthly, gift cards to Office Depot or Walmart.
**Contact:** Janet Blair, 813-545-1716 or Janet_Blair@DCF.state.fl.us
Southeast

Ft. Lauderdale

**Bella’s Group**, under the umbrella of Forever Family, is a support group for children being raised by family members who are not their parents. It was started when sisters, Isabella and Gabriella, who were being raised by their grandparents, discovered there wasn’t a support group. Throughout the year, the girls, with the help of grandparent Drs. Ira and Marietta Glazer, host free events that are fun for the children and offer adults raising them networking and access to community support agencies. Approximately 36,636 children in Broward reside in households headed by a relative.

**Website:** Foreverfamily.org/BellasGroup.html

**Ideal Wish:** $1,500 to $2,000 for an event for the children and their families.

**Other Needs:** Money to purchase laptop computers ($350 each), gift cards for household supplies, food, clothes and toys.

**Contact:** Kim Gorsuch, 954-331-3405 or Kim_Gorsuch@dcf.state.fl.us

Southern

Miami

**Kakes 4 Kids** is a non-profit organization that celebrates birthdays for children in foster care, as well as underprivileged children, who may never have a birthday celebration otherwise. Every month, Kakes 4 Kids visits a group foster home and celebrates birthdays with entertainment, food, crafts, gifts and personalized cakes for each birthday child. Currently, Kakes 4 Kids provides events for over 300 children a month, and celebrates an average of 25 birthdays. Their goal is to ensure children understand their birth was the start of a precious life.

**Website:** Kakes4kidsflorida.org

**Ideal Wish:** Donation for a party, which ranges between $500 - $1,000. Cash gift cards for food and party supplies.

**Other Needs:** Gift cards to department stores for children. Donations are always welcome or you can sponsor a gift for $50. You can also sponsor a cake for $30 through the website. Sponsor a large bounce house at $200, or a field trip $300 - $1,500.

**Contact:** Antonio Wagner, 786-257-5055 or Antonio_Wagner@dcf.state.fl.us, Lissette Valdes-Valle, 305-345-8407 or Lissette_Valdes-Valle@dcf.state.fl.us

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