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Cutline:

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Kids Aging Out of Foster Care are Finally Getting the Help They Need

Community Foundation of Broward Raises \$100,000 to Support Foster Kids

(Fort Lauderdale, Fla.) -- Janet de las Cuevas, 20, has lost count of the number of homes she has lived in since she was 8 years old and separated from her narcotic-addicted mother. For one six-year period, she was able to live with her brother, who is 20 years her senior. A rebellious teen at the time, however, she eventually found herself back in foster care, living at a group home for girls in Coral Springs. When she turned 18, she bounced from one rented room to another.

"There's nothing harder than living with a bunch of teenage girls, who are all dramatic and hormonal," recalled Janet, who lived in the home until she turned 18. "I was very nervous about being on my own, but the Road to Independence (RTI) program helped me get the money I needed to pay rent and attend college."

Janet is grateful for the RTI program as well as life coaches and social workers she met along the way. Today, a mother of a 9-month old and a Broward College student who wants to be a middle school math teacher, she participates in programs provided by the FLITE Center, where she attends mommy and baby classes. She has also found support at FLITE for her son who suffers from hearing loss.

As one of more than 100 18-year olds who leave the foster care system each year, Janet represents a growing number of former foster kids who are finding the resources they need to live successful and productive lives.

Together with fundholders Nancy Bryant and Jerry Taylor, the Community Foundation of Broward recently raised \$100,000 to help young people like Janet find stability and success in their lives. Since 2003, the Foundation and partner organizations have invested more than \$14 million in programs aimed at assisting young people aging out of the foster care system. Programs supported include those that provide education, job training and internships, savings matching, community centers, mentoring and much more.

Bryant and Taylor, two Community Foundation donors were looking for an innovative way to shed light on this issue. Their philanthropic advisors at the Community Foundation suggested a \$50,000 challenge grant, the Foster Success Challenge. In only five short weeks, the Community Foundation staff was able to turn \$50,000 into \$100,000 to help former foster youth throughout Broward County make the difficult transition to independence.

"When we first learned about the plight of foster kids who must leave the state's care at age 18, we cringed at how hopeless and alone these children without families must feel," said fundholder Nancy Bryant. "Working with the Community Foundation of Broward, we have now found innovative and constructive ways to help these youth overcome their misfortunes to carve a better path for their lives."

Donated to 11 different nonprofit organizations, including the FLITE Center, the grants will engage youth in more than 300 hours of GED tutoring, counseling and life skills classes; provide 44 youth with bus passes for one full year to eliminate obstacles to fulfilling school, work and home

commitments; give partial housing subsidies to 15 youth to fill the gap between income and safe housing costs.

This issue will remain a priority for the Community Foundation, as the statistics for former foster youth continue to be daunting. Within two to four years of turning 18, 51 percent of these youth will be unemployed, 25 percent will be homeless and 25 percent will be incarcerated.

“The Foster Success Challenge is a critical Community Foundation of Broward initiative for foster youth who transition out of care,” said Linda B. Carter, president/CEO of the organization. “We remain committed to offering a hand up to young people, so they may become successful, independent adults.”

About the Community Foundation of Broward

Founded in 1984, the Community Foundation of Broward's mission is to provide leadership on community solutions, and foster philanthropy that connects people who care with causes that matter. A public nonprofit organization with more than 400 Charitable Funds and agency endowments representing \$90 million, it has distributed \$45 million to support community solutions over the past 26 years. As a community leader, it convenes citizens around critical issues, and builds the capacity of the nonprofit sector to respond to these issues. For more information about the Community Foundation of Broward, visit www.cfbroward.org or call 954-761-9503.