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COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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News & Media

Foster a Dream Foundation still making dreams come true for former foster children

Port St. Lucie – Katherine A. Basile believed that any child in foster care could find success with the right support. That was her dream – a dream now fostered by the foundation set up in memory of the woman known locally as a champion for children’s rights.

The Katherine A. Basile Foster a Dream Foundation has contributed more than \$15,000 and helped 29 teenagers in foster care since the foundation was created in late 2010. Contributions have paid for high-school and college-related expenses like laptop computers, graduation expenses and tours of college campuses.

“This has been critical funding for us,” said Christina Kaiser, director of community relations for Devereux Community Based Care, the non-profit agency responsible for the local child-welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. “Children who spend much of their lives in foster care often miss the opportunities the rest of us take for granted – like going to the senior prom, buying cap and gown for a high-school graduation or visiting a prospective college.”

Since the advent of programs like Road to Success, which prepares teens and young adults for life outside of foster care, more foster children are graduating high school and pursuing post-secondary education, Kaiser said. That makes the Foster a Dream Foundation even more important.

“I never thought I would be in college, getting an education like this,” said Tiana Robinson, who is studying to be an environmental scientist. “This opportunity keeps me going strong.”

Robinson said aging out of the foster-care system, combined with the pressure of making good grades, has been stressful. But the help she’s received from the Foster a Dream Foundation allows her to keep her focus on school.

In 2013, the foundation paid for Robinson’s cap and gown expenses, a ticket and dress to her senior prom and college application and orientation fees.

“I get to pursue my dream,” she said. “I see myself having a bright future doing something I love – and that’s all thanks to this program.”

Foster a Dream also paid for two local youth advocates to attend the statewide Florida Youth SHINE meeting in January. Youth SHINE is an organization that coordinates members to advocate on behalf of children still in foster care. Daniel Pettus, the group’s statewide chair, and Mary Power, both aged out of the local foster-care system and spend much of their time meeting with local legislatures.

During the January meeting, they discussed priorities for the group’s legislative agenda for the 2014 session. One of those priorities was getting legislation passed that would make it easier for teens in foster care to get their driver’s licenses. The issue was drafted into a bill, found support in both the house and senate and is now awaiting final authorization from the governor.

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