

Food Brings Hope – Daytona Beach News-Journal, October 11, 2010

Donation gives 'hope' to kids

By LINDA TRIMBLE, Education writer

DAYTONA BEACH -- Skye Symonette remembers her visit to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to watch a basketball game and hear a pep talk from the president of the Women's National Basketball Association as a chance to get a glimpse of a "high-tech" college campus.

It's the kind of place the 10-year-old Westside Elementary fifth-grader hopes will be in her future as she pursues her dream of becoming a doctor.

Food Brings Hope, a local charity that benefits homeless and economically disadvantaged children, sponsored the January visit, which also included dinner for dozens of children from five area schools.

Troubled by her children's stories about homeless classmates, businesswoman Forough Hosseini launched the program in 2007 with the advice and support of local educators and community leaders. It serves children in after-school programs at four Volusia campuses now and Hosseini plans to add a couple more during the school year.

Helping make that possible is a recent \$250,000 donation from the FKB Humanitarian Trust -- established by Hosseini's family -- as title sponsor for a Jan. 20 banquet at which she will receive the Herbert M. Davidson Award for Outstanding Community Service from the Community Foundation of Volusia and Flagler Counties.

The foundation is a division of United Way of Volusia & Flagler Counties, which provides a mechanism for donors like Hosseini to set up programs managed and administered by that organization and stay involved in how contributions are spent. Sponsorships and ticket sales for the January banquet will benefit Food Brings Hope and two other donor-advised funds operating under the Community Foundation umbrella.

But it's the children who are the ultimate beneficiaries of Food Brings Hope, according to Hosseini and local educators familiar with the program that varies from school to school. The program supports tutoring programs, including transportation and after-school snacks; visits to museums, ball games and cultural programs; student rewards and motivational presentations.

"The self-worth of these kids is so low," Hosseini said.

Speakers like Gov. Charlie Crist and WNBA President Donna Orender, who was the featured speaker at the Embry-Riddle event, were brought in to meet with participating children last year in addition to local sports coaches and a nutritionist who taught them about healthy eating.

"Even children of poverty are obese because they're not eating the right food," said Judi Winch, principal of Westside Elementary where Food Brings Hope has been integrated into an after-school program known as Westside Night Alive. "Children have to be fed to be productive."

The food and nutrition lessons offered by Food Brings Hope fit well with the physical activities such as tennis and soccer that are part of Westside Night Alive, Winch said. "It's about doing the right thing, eating correctly, understanding the importance of giving back," she said, adding that participating children often collect food or money to benefit homeless families.

So far this school year, 1,360 homeless children have registered in Volusia schools, according to homeless education liaison Pam Woods. That's up 85 students from a year ago at a time when the district's overall enrollment is down by more than 700 students.

Campbell Middle School Principal Vickie Presley said Food Brings Hope exposes her students to cultural and community service activities they would never know about otherwise. "It is so worthwhile," she said.

Hosseini expects her family's recent donation and other funding raised from the upcoming banquet will help send Food Brings Hope participants to college when they're ready. The first of them are slated for high school graduation in 2012, she said.

Thom Moss, program director for Westside Night Alive, isn't surprised to see that kind of commitment from the founder of Food Brings Hope. "For her, it's an investment from the heart for our children," he said.

© 2010 The Daytona Beach News-Journal.

Donation gives 'hope' to kids

By LINDA TRIMBLE, Education writer



Jesenia Barron, 10, chases down a shot during a tennis game Tuesday at an after-school program at Westside Elementary School in Daytona Beach. N-J | Nigel Cook



Skye Symonette says her dream is to become a doctor one day. N-J | Linda Trimble



Teacher Jane Duguay gets a spontaneous hug while participating in an after-school program Tuesday at Westside Elementary School in Daytona Beach. N-J | Nigel Cook