

Pineapple Post

December 4, 2017

Volunteering Series by Helena Kyle

Volunteering Series: Give the Gift of Hope
Featuring, Place of Hope of the Treasure Coast
By Helena Kyle
helenakyle@outlook.com
Dedicated to my mother, Anna Maria.

Thousands of children along the Treasure Coast are in desperate need of a good home. Teachers, medical professionals, law officers and neighbors, typically witness the unconscionable tragedy of child abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Every one of us is affected with the natural consequences that ensue when a child is left in an abusive situation and living in a perpetual state of hopelessness; increased substance abuse, alcoholism, and crime. The good news is, you and I can help ensure that every child in need will be placed in a loving, nurturing home, by volunteering, in some capacity, for Place of Hope.

Place of Hope is rated #1 in the nation by Charity Navigator, for the past 3 years in a row, for youth development, shelter, and crisis services.

My husband and I initially learned of Place of Hope at a party during the holidays last December. We were invited to a holiday party by a RE/MAX realtor we became acquainted with shortly after moving to the Treasure Coast, Deana Peterson. The party invitation sent to us, was different than an ordinary invitation; on the back, it read: Let's "Party with a Purpose"! "Please bring a package of diapers or a gift card (to purchase presents) for children in Foster care." We arrived to the party with a box of diapers in tow, and our curiosity at an all-time high. Deana and her husband, Fred, were volunteering for Place of Hope by throwing a "Party with a Purpose", which is quite a fun way to volunteer! Deana and Fred also volunteer to foster children in need of immediate home placement. They may care for a child for one day, to one year, depending on circumstances. Occasionally, a baby or young child will arrive on a moment's notice with the clothes on their back, which is why diaper drives, clothing, meals and gift cards are helpful. Fostering children is not for everyone, but for some it is a calling; Deana and Fred opened their hearts and their home to the calling two years ago.

On a monthly average, fifty-one children throughout the Treasure Coast are removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Needless to say, there is a tremendous need for foster parents.

I made an appointment for me and my husband to tour three of the organization's campuses; the Family Cottages, a beautiful neighborhood of spacious homes built and dedicated for family-style foster care of sibling groups or children with special needs; Joann's Cottage, a family-style maternity home that provides comprehensive care for young mothers and mothers-to-be, and The Villages of Hope, homes for young adults up to twenty-four years-old, preparing for post foster care, independent living. Our guide, Jamie Bond, was

inspired to seek employment with Place of Hope upon hearing the riveting testimony of a young man who experienced positive life transformation resulting from living in the care of a Place of Hope foster home.

The children residing in the Family Cottages, are offered an ideal family life-style; they attend school, participate in extracurricular activities, keep their bedroom tidy, help with household tasks, including laundry, and they have their meals at the dining room table as a family. They are given age-appropriate life skills education and mentoring to prepare them to become responsible, healthy-functional adults.

Foster parents become licensed prior to fostering, and Place of Hope offers parents a supportive network. Also, parents do not need to be stay-at-home moms or dads in order to foster a child. Single adults, and seasonal residents may foster children. Foster parents can choose the age, gender, and the number of children they wish to foster; there is no obligation to commit to long-term foster care.

Other ways to volunteer for Place of Hope, include: Offer tutoring to students in foster care, or host a diaper, grocery and gift card drive, donate artwork, or other specialty items to the silent auction held at the annual Sea of Hope Angel Moms Luncheon; all annual events are listed on the website. Down-sizing or moving? Donate gently used items and household furnishings to the Treasures of Hope Charity Store.

Whether throwing a party with a purpose, or becoming a foster parent, you and I can make a difference. Join me in making good news. Let's positively impact the Treasure Coast, one-child-at-a-time, by volunteering for Place of Hope.

Typically, children are rescued from an abusive situation by a phone call to child protection services. Listen to your inner voice! If you witness, or suspect that a child/children, is in an abusive situation, do not hesitate to call the Florida Department of Children and Families helpline. Calls are completely confidential: 1-800-96-abuse.

For more information:

Jamie Bond

Business Development & Community Relations

Treasure Coast & Okeechobee Counties; 561-775-71951 www.placeofhope.com