

ACHIEVE THE DREAM



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- Foster Teen's Pet Goal
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- Connecting with Runaways

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Achieving the Dream

Heart Gallery Teen Wants to Be Vet After Aging Out of Foster Care

Children's Board Heart Gallery foster teen Carlito has just one memory of life outside foster care. He is 2 years old, sitting in a front yard, eating tiny hot dogs out of a can. He doesn't know why he has spent his life in group homes, nor is he curious.

His mom once reached out to him on Facebook. He didn't ask questions. From one home to the next, Carlito learned to cope.

He used to steal, fight, run away and get in trouble. He was arrested for the first time at age 11. He got kicked out of a group home and uprooted his little brother Dontriel in the move because caseworkers wanted to keep them together.

That's part of what made him change; he realized he needed to be better for both of them. His caseworker says he's now one of the best kids she has.

Carlito is 17 now. His wish for adoption has faded. "It's mostly for younger kids," he says. In five months, he



Photo of Carlito by St. Pete Times.

will "age out" of the system, as it's called. Statistics are not kind to kids like him. There's a one in five chance they will wind up homeless, reports say. They're eight times more likely to go to jail than finish college. High school graduation? Not much more than a 50-50 chance.

But Carlito predicts otherwise. "I can't wait to get my high school diploma to show that I did it," he says. He has attended three high schools. That happens sometimes in foster care, when you change homes. "It's like being a stranger in a village," he says. "No one knows you. You're lost. You're bumping into people. You're, like, the nerdy kid."

Carlito has a dream many kids share, but never pursue. He knows it will take years of study and grants and scholarships, but he insists he will one day be a veterinarian. Throughout foster care, he found comfort in animals. They may bite, but their world makes more sense.

Carlito, 17, hopes someone close to his Plant City home will give him the opportunity to work with animals, to learn more about the career path he hopes to one day pursue veterinary medicine. To help grant his wish, contact the **Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay**, (813) 204-1792.

See the complete story at <http://tiny.cc/t02f1>.

Carlito's Story Inspires Readers Readers resonated with the aging-out foster teen who wants a chance to work with animals as a beginning step in his dream to become a veterinarian. So many animal lovers contacted the **Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay** with opportunities for 17-year-old Carlito that his caseworker is having meetings to narrow down his options to the best choice.

Four veterinarians wanted to give him a chance to learn from their expertise. Three farms wanted to take him on. Hillsborough Circuit Judge Catherine Catlin offered to arrange a visit to animal court — "I hope other children in foster care can be inspired by Carlito's spirit and strength," she said.

Even Lowry Park Zoo called with an invitation. Others wanted to know where to send Carlito letters of encouragement. Some sent checks. One reader said she is willing to help support his continued schooling once he gets his associate's degree.

"Once people in our community hear the stories of these kids in their own words," said Heart Gallery director Jesse Miller, "they can begin to see how a little of their time and support could really make a difference."

See <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/readers-grant-holiday-wishes-for-those-in-need/1207590>.



Learn about the **Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay** at <http://www.heartgallerytampabay.org/>



Ben Carpenter. Photo by the Tampa Tribune.

Teen Overcomer's Charity Restores Broken Books to Donate

He fixes spines, mends tears and restores missing pieces. Ben Carpenter started this work when he was 12 and has refurbished a library's worth of books during the past four years. He has donated the restored books, about 4,200 in all, to assisted living facilities, schools, homeless shelters and other organizations through his nonprofit company, Ben's Mends.

Carpenter, now 16, said his sense of civil service is inspired by two things: his parents and a congenital condition, spinal muscular atrophy, which causes muscle degeneration and weakness. The medical care that has helped him lead a productive life drives him to give to others, he said.

Carpenter is a volunteer for Junior Achievement, Shriners Hospitals and other groups but wanted a charity to call his own. See <http://www2.tbo.com/news/holidays/2011/dec/27/menewso1-broken-spine-torn-pages-help-fuel-teens-c-ar-340895/>

'Angel' Book Sales Help Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay

Lori Diez, adopted as a child, donates much of the sales of her book, "Angel or Not? Angel for Sure," to the **Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay**. The book addresses the topic of bullying.

See http://www.abcactionnews.com/dpp/news/local_news/a-local-mother-hopes-to-stop-bullying-as-she-also-donates-to-adoption-organization

Cub Scout Pack Adopts Foster Angels at Children's Board

The **Children's Board** Foster Angel Tree was visited by Cub Scout Pack 334 in December. The pack adopted four foster angels, which meant Christmas gifts for four children in foster care. (See picture at right.)

4th, 8th Grade Students Score High Among Urban Districts

On Hillsborough County fourth- and eighth-graders outperformed many of their peers in big-city school systems, according to results of a test often called the nation's report card. For the first time this year, Hillsborough participated in the urban version of the highly respected National Assessment of Educational Progress test.

In the study of 21 districts, the reading scores of Hillsborough's fourth- and eighth-graders landed the district in the top tier. It posted the highest overall average score in fourth-grade reading. Results were mixed, but largely positive, in math. For example, fourth-graders scored higher (86 percent) than the national average (82 percent) and did better than the average for other urban districts (74 percent). "I think it's definitely a reflection of the hard work that goes on in our classroom," said superintendent MaryEllen Elia.



Austrian Chef, Catholic Nun Are Spirit Behind Trinity Cafe

The following was published in the Tampa Tribune as a "Hometown Hero" feature story about two inspirational people:

Alfred Astl frets a lot. And with good reason: He's the chef at Trinity Café, a restaurant that serves the homeless and working poor in downtown Tampa. He operates on a razor-thin budget, stretching pennies instead of dollars, in order to feed the growing throng of hungry people who come for a free noontime meal Monday through Friday.

"He always thinks he's going to run out, which he never does," confides Sister Maureen Dorr, the 81-year-old Franciscan nun who stopped in to volunteer 10 years ago and never left. "I tell him not to worry. I happen to know another man who multiplied. He really had a way with loaves and fishes, and so does Alfred." That's how it is with the Austrian chef with the serious demeanor and the fun-spirited Catholic sister who's a bit of a flirt. They are the yin and yang of Trinity Café. He does the nourishing — creating innovative and well-balanced meals from soup to dessert at about \$2 a serving. She does the nurturing — walking among the homeless guests to dispense hugs, give counsel and offer prayers.

Neither seeks out attention. But they got it anyway last month. Sister Maureen was named a local hero by Bank of America, which came with a \$5,000 check. Astl, 61, was chosen as a community hero by the Tampa Bay Lightning — an honor that came with a \$50,000 award. Both directed their winnings to the café's food account.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/news/faith/2011/dec/19/austrian-chef-catholic-nun-are-spirit-behind-trini-ar-336250/>

Card-Maker Has Personal Touch for Heart Gallery Children in Foster Care



Cassandra Young creates hand-made cards for children in foster care. The **Children's Board Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay** attaches the picture of a foster child to each card on its Giving Tree. (Photos by Tampa Tribune.) See <http://www2.tbo.com/news/entertainment/2011/dec/31/menewso4-card-maker-deals-in-personal-touches-ar-342237/>



HKI's Melchert Helps Reduce Number of Foster Teen Runaways

The following was published in the Tampa Tribune as a "Hometown Hero" feature story about an inspirational person:

Trina Melchert admits teenagers didn't inspire her career in child welfare. She figured working in foster care would involve younger kids, not surly, independent teens told by a court where and with whom they could live. That was until she started meeting the runaways. Mostly girls, they would bolt from group homes or foster homes, thinking the streets would be better. Odds were these teens would instead become sexually exploited or victimized by men claiming to be boyfriends.

"All children are vulnerable, but foster teens are a different kind of vulnerable. Their sense of trust, it can be used against them," said Melchert, 28, who for six years has worked for Hillsborough Kids Inc., the nonprofit agency overseeing the county's 2,800 abused and neglected children. "They want to be loved. They want to be told they are beautiful, and the people on the streets will provide that for them."

The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that 39,000 young runaways or homeless children a year are sexually assaulted or exploited in the United States. Most fall into the trap within 48 to 72 hours of leaving a foster or group home. The insidious speed at which these predators move heightened Melchert's determination to improve the way she and others searched for Hillsborough's foster runaways.

A turning point was the discovery of a pregnant, 16-year-old foster runaway in an abandoned apartment. The girl was passed out, with drugs in her system. Melchert discovered that Duval County was having luck in finding runaways and keeping them from fleeing again. She went there, learned and proposed revamping how Hillsborough Kids and local law enforcement deal with foster runaways.

Within a year, the number of Hillsborough foster runaways dropped, from 62 to 19. The changes didn't involve an infusion of money. They included new search tactics: fliers were passed out in neighborhoods where the teen used to live. More importantly, runaways weren't treated as criminals once they were found. Case managers asked about what made the teen take off and see what kind of help they needed.

Scolding a girl for running off and getting high did nothing to build trust and relationship, Melchert said. "People connect to people, not a program," she said. That ability to develop a healthy rapport with foster teens comes naturally to Melchert, her supervisor says. And her professional passion for helping runaways sets a high standard for the whole staff.

"There are boundaries and she's aware of it," said Jessica Harlan, Hillsborough Kids' family connections manager. "She stays connected in a safe way. It truly is a gift. It's not something that's taught."

See the complete story at

<http://www2.tbo.com/news/moms/2011/dec/21/menewso1-shes-a-gift-to-foster-teens-ar-337109/>



Trina Melchert, left, with a former runaway. (Tampa Tribune.)

Guardian Ad Litem Named a Lightning Community Hero

The Tampa Bay Lightning honored Richard Cadogan as a Lightning Community Hero. Cadogan, who received a \$50,000 donation from the Lightning Foundation and the Lightning Community Heroes program, will contribute the money to his charity of choice, Guardian Ad Litem.



Richard Cadogan (center).
Photo by the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Cadogan has selflessly given his time as a Guardian Ad Litem full-time volunteer for the past 11 years. Of more than 60 cases handled while with the organization, Cadogan has been responsible for reuniting 19 children with their biological parents and has also assisted in finding loving, adoptive parents for 26 others. Cadogan has helped advocate for these children's in their best interests and, as a result, helped them moved out of foster care. See the complete writeup by the Lightning at <http://lightning.nhl.com/club/news.htm?id=608420>.

Lightning Owner Vinik Praised for Giving to Charity, Community Heroes

Jeff Vinik jump-started the Tampa Bay Lightning's Community Hero program, giving a nonprofit group \$50,000 at each of 41 home games in the 2011-12 season. That's \$2,050,000 in just one season, and only a fraction of the \$10 million Vinik and wife, Penny, have pledged to local charities.

It's not just money. Tampa Bay Lightning employees have pledged to volunteer 100 hours each over the course of the year. The best way to encourage others to give back, Vinik said, is to lead by example. See the writeup by the Lightning at <http://lightning.nhl.com/club/news.htm?id=608420>

Listen to This Week's Programs on CBHC Radio

Listen to this week's programming on **CBHC Radio**, the Internet radio station of the **Children's Board**. Click "Launch Player" at http://www.childrensboard.org/cbhc_radio.aspx3. For mobile media, go to: <http://icy2.abacast.com/childrensboard-radio-32.m3u>.

Children's Board Links to Facebook, Twitter

Go to www.facebook.com/MyCBHC and see the latest **Children's Board Facebook** postings.

Follow the **Children's Board** on **Twitter** at www.twitter.com/MyCBHC.

Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities - Go to

http://www.childrensboard.org/jobs_volunteer_opportunities.aspx and click on the top link for updated job postings in Hillsborough County.

Calendar - Go to <http://www.childrensboard.org/calendar.aspx> to access the upcoming community and provider calendar. Click on the top link for the latest events and trainings, in chronological order.

Metropolitan Ministries' CEO is in the Business of Giving

Morris Hintzman, chief executive officer of Metropolitan Ministries, a nonprofit organization that serves the homeless and the hungry in the Tampa Bay area, just completed his 30th year with the organization. Three decades later, Metropolitan Ministries has more than 100 employees and thousands of volunteers who donate about 100,000 hours a year.

In 2011, 22,000 hurting families came to outreach centers and received food, housing assistance and help with utility bills. While the needs can seem overwhelming at times, Hintzman always is quick to look for the positive spin. For example, 31 unemployed men and women in the program found jobs this year, earning an average salary that is 40 percent above the minimum wage.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/lifestyles/faith/2011/dec/31/menewso1-ministries-ceo-in-business-of-giving-ar-342289/>



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Children's Board
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
Dreams Worth Growing

Local News

Children's Board KidzCreate Gallery of Art Opens New Exhibit at CBHC



On display in the lobby of the **Children's Board**: a new **Children's Board KidzCreate Gallery of Art** exhibit, "Reading helps me reach for the stars," an exhibit by Dee Miller and students from several organizations (*right*). The main partnership is with seniors in service and the kids they tutor in afterschool programs. This is part of the major statewide KidzCreate literacy grant. The theme of this exhibit is occupations for kids to strive for after reading a book on what they want to be when they grow up. Also on display and part of the literacy grant: a mural from the book "On the Day you were Born" by Sacred Heart Academy and Raquel Ache Leonard (*above*).



Fundraisers Benefit Various Charities

Various fundraisers for charities were highlighted in the St. Petersburg Times and Tampa Tribune during December.

...Former Tampa Bay Buccaneer and community leader Ryan Nece held an event that collected \$6,000 for his foundation to spend on teens residing at a Hillsborough County Children's Services facility.

...Several Tampa Bay Buccaneers took 30 families – chosen by non-profit agencies – on a shopping spree at Target. It was the team's fifth annual Day of Giving.

...The Shop with Cops project netted toys, clothes and other items for 28 children who live with relative or single parents or are in foster care. The children benefiting from the program range in age from 3 to 16.

...St. Joseph's Children's Hospital's Celebrity Holiday Fashion Show netted more than \$60,000.

...From The Children's Home: Creative Loafing held an annual online auction that raised nearly \$18,000; 98 Rock raised close to \$4,000.

Support Tampa Bay Youth and Win Tickets to Super Bowl XLVI

The City of Tampa's NFL Youth Education Town (NFL YET) has launched its second annual "Super Bowl for Super Kids" raffle contest. Contestants will play to win two tickets to the 2012 Super Bowl in Indianapolis, including four nights lodging and \$1000 travel cash. By entering the contest, players will be directly supporting Tampa's NFL YET at Jackson Heights, which offers programs and services in the areas of education, life-skills development and recreation to the children who need it the most. Only 500 tickets will be sold. Suggested donations are \$50 for one ticket, \$125 for three tickets and \$200 for five tickets. Ticket are available to purchase online at <http://www.nflyettampa.org/>

Check Out the Healthy Start Coalition E-Newsletter -

<http://www.healthystartcoalition.org/images/files/hsc%20newsletter%20winter%202011.pdf>

HKI Likely to Lose Child Welfare Services Contract after DCF Recommendation -

<http://www2.tbo.com/news/news/2012/jan/04/1/change-is-coming-for-child-welfare-ar-343426/> and

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/panel-replace-hillsborough-kids-with-eckerd-community-alternatives/1208936>

Passing the FCAT Likely to Get Tougher -

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/article1205348.ece>

Neighborhood News

(From the Healthy Start Coalition E-Newsletter)



Children's Board
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

Centers Get a New Name, Same Quality Services

The Family Support & Resource Centers now have a new look and a new name. The Centers will now be known throughout the community as the Children's Board Family Resource Centers. The name change came about follow-



Creative Learning Class

ing a fall 2011 community survey (phone, online and focus groups) as to what name for the Centers would be most remembered by community members and bring recognition to the funder. The new name is being implemented across the five centers funded by the Children's Board.

Families who visit the Centers will start to see the new logo and look soon after the new year. One



Mobile Health Clinic

thing that Children's Board Family Resource Centers Director, Maria Negron, emphasizes is that the Centers will have the same quality service. They are universal access, where all programs and services are available at no cost to families and individuals. They offer a welcoming environment where caring staff and other families offer support, volunteer opportunities and new friendships.

Children's Board Family Resource Centers are located in Brandon, Central Tampa, North Tampa, South County and Town 'N County and are administered by the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County. Managing partners include: Bright Beginnings, Child Abuse Council, The Children's Home, Inc., Family Community Advisory Councils, Prevent Blindness Florida and St. Joseph's Children's Advocacy Center.

Each Center is unique in its services and programming, however there is an emphasis on child development, family stability and success, and health and safety. Through community partnerships the Centers are able to provide new opportunities for families with children.

Developmental Screening

Developmental screening is offered at all five locations for children ages 2 months to 5 years.



Computer Classes

Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, families with infants and young children are able to identify developmental delays and receive referrals to community resources.

Mobile Dental Coach

Suncoast Community Health Centers' Mobile Dental Coach is offering Children's Board Family Resource Centers in Brandon and South County dental screening through March 2012. Services are free to qualified participants ages 6 months to 18 years.

Vision Screening

Through a partnership with Prevent Blindness Florida, vision screenings are offered at all five locations for qualified participants ages 2 years to 18 years. No appointment is necessary and upon completion of the screen, a voucher will be given for those

needing glasses.

Hearing Screening

Hearing screenings will resume in January 2012 at all five locations with nurses from St. Joseph's Children's Advocacy Center.

Children's Board Family Resource Centers over the past year (10/1/10 – 9/30/11):

- Total Participants Served = 23,189
- Total Amount of Volunteer Hours = 3,694
- Total Amount of Services = 76,536

For more information about the Children's Board Family Resource Centers, please visit:

www.familysupporthc.org

Neighborhood News

'Steph' Thanks Children's Board Town 'N Country Family Resource Center

"I just wanted

to tell u I got a job at citrus mall,

The Children's place :) . The manager called

yesterday and asked me if I wanted to join their team,

I didn't refuse and I start tomorrow at 7pm. I'm excited!

Its only seasonal but hopefully I will do so well they keep me on full time.

Once again thank you for all your help. I think it was the experience I have with kids and how I presented myself at the interview (the other girls wore jeans, short shorts, baggy close, and messy hair they just looked horrible). I wore a black business pants and a white long sleeve business shirt. Either those girls didn't really care or they have never been to a Coffee & Career class :)

lol

Anyway, I just wanted to let you

know I got a job and thank u again.

I'll keep u posted".

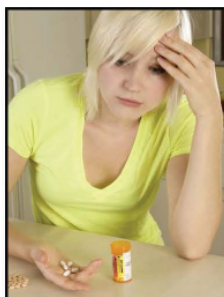
Thank you Yanira and ALL Center staff for your never ending support!

(Note: This note was from 'Steph,' who visits the **Children's Board Town 'N Country Family Resource Center**. Yanira works with Brooke and Ruth on the **Children's Board**-funded Bright Beginnings' Family Success/Self-Sufficiency team.)

Children's Board-Funded Zero Exposure Program Targets its Marketing

In response to the growing epidemic of babies being born exposed to prescription drugs prenatally, the Healthy Start Coalition's Zero Exposure Project (ZEP), funded by the **Children's Board**, has initiated a new marketing campaign. The promotional efforts raise public awareness and educate women of child-bearing age in Hillsborough County about the dangers of taking pain pills and other prescription drugs during pregnancy. More importantly, the campaign offers women a phone number that will get them and their unborn babies the help they need. The information can be found on 20 bus benches in targeted areas where women are getting prenatal care and addiction treatment. Ads can also be seen near pain clinics where many people are prescribed opiates. .

For more information about the Zero Exposure Program, go online to http://www.healthystartcoalition.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=135&Itemid=155



Don't pass down your prescription pill addiction to your baby... That pain will never go away.

Get help now.
Call 1-877-233-5656
www.zeroexposure.org



Abusing pain pills harms everyone. If you are pregnant, your baby becomes addicted too.

Get help now.
Call 1-877-233-5656
www.zeroexposure.org



Advocacy

Commentary: Earliest Years Critical for Good Educational Results

David Lawrence, head of the Children's Movement of Florida, wrote a commentary about why the earliest years of a child's life are critical for good educational results. "The greatest American "invention" was not the light bulb or the telephone or even the Internet. It was the public school," Lawrence wrote.

See <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/earliest-years-critical-for-good-educational-results/1204902>

State News

Florida's Adoption Success Earns Federal Money

Florida's increasing success in finding adoptive homes for foster children is translating into more cash from the federal government for adoption incentives. Florida will receive nearly \$4 million for the adoption program. That money is expected to be used to pay families who adopt foster children. Anyone who adopts a child from foster care receives \$417 a month until the child turns 18.

The federal cash award is based on the number of children adopted last year, as well as the number of children with special needs who were adopted. More than 3,000 Florida foster children found permanent homes last year. There are still about 800 children in Florida waiting to be adopted. For more information, go to www.adoptflorida.org.

See <http://www.wtsp.com/wednesdaychild/article/225157/23/Floridas-adoption-success-earns-federal-money?source=nletter->

More Kids Likely to Lose Medicaid Coverage Due to Higher Premiums

New premiums and co-pay proposals for Florida Medicaid beneficiaries, including \$100 for every non-emergency ER visit, are among the highest in the country, and could cause hundreds of thousands to drop out because they can't afford to pay, according to a report by Georgetown University.

See <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/12/07/2539774/study-florida-medicaid-premiums.html>

National News

States Are Spending More on Medicaid and Less on Education

Medicaid has steadily eaten up a growing share of state budgets over the past three years, while education has been getting a smaller slice of the pie.

See <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/11348/1196701-84-0.stm?cmpid=news.xml>

Despite Recession, Child Abuse Figures Are Falling -

<http://yourlife.usatoday.com/parenting-family/story/2011-09-25/Less-play-time-equals-more-troubled-kids-experts-say/50531770/1>

U.S. Approves First Heart Pump for Children -

http://m.yahoo.com/w/news_america/us-approves-first-heart-pump-children-001514012.html?back=%2Fhealth%2F&ts=1324173992&.intl=us&.lang=en

RtcUpdates Shares Info About Youth with Mental Health Issues

rtcUpdates is a monthly newsletter by the Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures in Portland, Oregon. It provides information about the RTC's recent research, publications, and other activities, as well as information about developments pertaining to young people ages 14-30, who have serious mental health conditions.

See <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/rtcupdates/rtcupdates-dec2011.shtml>