

From Donna White
Press Release
6/4/09
Suitcases for Kids
suitcases4kids.org

[Headline]

Suitcases Campaign to Help Foster Children

“... They had already thrown all my stuff into the cheap white kitchen trash bags. The pictures of my real family were just thrown in, and some of them got torn or bent.” Chris, a 14-year-old now in the care of the Haverhill office of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), had moved 17 times before, but this one was particularly painful. Those photos were dear to him.

To help Chris and the other 14,000 children in foster care across Massachusetts, a small troop of volunteers has organized *Suitcases for Kids* (suitcases4kids.org). Their mission?

Every child in the care of the Department of Children and Families in Massachusetts has at least one suitcase so that when they are moving to a new home, they can pack their belongings with dignity.

[subhead]

Suitcases goal

Ron Nickerson, co-chair of *Suitcases for Kids* in the Haverhill area, explained that the campaign will flow statewide one region at a time and Haverhill is the first target area. “Our success depends on the donations from the community. It is our mission in cooperation with the Haverhill area DCF office to collect 1,000 suitcases so that each child receives at least one suitcase.

[subhead]

Dignity for each child

Nickerson, himself a foster dad with two sons, said, “After 25 years of working with children, I have seen enough kids with trash bags! It’s time to give them some dignity.”

“We want to make this project special for the children,” added Donna White, co-chair and mother of two. “The message we hope to send is ‘You are important. You are valuable!’ We believe that the love, care, and commitment from this Haverhill area project will light a fire of inspiration

and spread *Suitcases for Kids* across Massachusetts and beyond. So far we have been very warmly received all throughout this community.”

The *Suitcases for Kids* project is being co-sponsored by the Haverhill office of DCF, which serves 11 neighboring towns.

[subhead]

Children with trash bags

Lucia Vega, social worker technician at the family resource/adoption unit in the Haverhill office, feels enthusiastic about this pilot community service project on more than one level. “*Suitcases for Kids* really interests me because in the unit where I work, we find placement for all children that come into care. I see all the children that walk into our office when they are being “placed” — usually with a black trash bag or, if not, then with nothing in their possession.

“It breaks my heart when I see a child leave their home — for whatever the reason might be — and on top of it all, they have nothing with them when they are placed in a foster home.”

[subhead]

Donating suitcases

If you would like to make a donation of new or gently used suitcases, duffel bags, or oversized backpacks, please bring them on *Suitcases for Kids* collection day to one of the following three drop-off sites.

Saturday, June 13, 2009

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

RAIN or SHINE

Triton Regional High School
112 Elm Street, Byfield, MA 01922

Pentucket Regional High School
24 Main Street, W. Newbury, MA 01985

Masconomet Regional High School
20 Endicott Road, Topsfield, MA 01983

For more information, contact
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