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FEATURED

Nonprofit helps children in foster care

By LEE WARDLAW Keys Citizen
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From left, Krissy Carnahan, Amber Naz, Emily Carter, Mirna Hormechea and Susan Raffanello thank the Ocean Reef Community Foundation for its support.

Photo provided

The nonprofit Voices for Florida Keys Children, which operates with no paid staff but through the helping hand of volunteers, supports the county's Guardian Ad Litem program for abused, abandoned and neglected children.

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“Through the dedication of our board members and volunteers who are dedicated to our mission, we are able to serve the needs of children that are under the auspices and who are within the Guardian ad Litem program,” said Susan Raffanello, an attorney at Coffey-Burlington and president of the Voices For Florida Keys Children.

The Guardian ad Litem is a Florida state office that provides free legal assistance to Florida’s most vulnerable children to help them navigate the complex foster care system.



Voices for Florida Keys Children supports Guardian ad Litem program’s in Monroe County by assisting with clothes and school supplies, medical and dental care, psychological tests and sessions, and more.

“We just ensure that the basic needs of the children are met,” Raffanello said.

The six-year president offered other examples of how the Voices group helps:

“We have provided food cards to families that are caring for the children within the program,” Raffanello said. “The state does not view braces and certain dental procedures as a medical necessity. We all know how much that matters, growing up and going to school. So we’ll fund orthodontic bills. They’re often simple surgeries that would otherwise not be paid for.

“If they get invited to a birthday party, then they’ll be able to bring a gift to that child, and then feel comfortable going to (the party) because everyone is bringing a gift, and they don’t want to show up empty-handed. Then, there’s a whole spectrum for after-school activities. If they need a dance recital costume, we purchase it, and if they choose to play a sport, then we can purchase the equipment.”

The group has plenty of programming and fundraising events planned in the coming months.

On Oct. 7, the Voices group will host the 2022 Guardian ad Litem Gala at Hawks Cay Resort on Duck Key. Reservations are required by Friday, Sept. 23, for the event honoring all Guardian ad Litem volunteers. Casual elegant attire is suggested for the event featuring fine dining, a silent auction, live DJ and dancing. To reserve a spot, call 305-292-3485.



Less than two months later, a holiday brunch will be held on Dec. 2. More details are to be announced soon.

Then, on March 18, 2023, the annual Voices for Florida Keys Children luncheon auction will take place at Hawks Cay Resort. Members should visit voiceskids.org to pay annual membership dues to ensure they are on the invite list.

To learn about the Voices program, visit facebook.com/voicesforflkeyschildren or email sraffanello@coffeyburlington.com.

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