

## FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

*Volunteers needed to speak for children*

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Here we are at the start of a new school year. And with the excitement of the opening of school, Erica Herman, executive director of Voices for Children of Broward County, is concerned about the “dark secret” some children have brought back to school along with their new uniforms and books.

The “dark secret,” she said, reveals signs of abuse and neglect many children have suffered over the summer, and are noticed by teachers and staff.

“Because children are subject to less adult supervision over the summer, it’s not uncommon for reports of suspected abuse and neglect to spike at the start of the school year,” Herman said.

She said many children confirmed as victims are removed from their homes and placed into foster care — often far from friends, families and schools.

This is where volunteers from Guardian ad Litem can be of great help, Herman said.

“These volunteers are specially screened and trained to speak up for abused and neglected children who, through no fault of their own, end up in the foster care system. Being uprooted from their homes and families is scary for these children and we want

to make sure they do not get lost in the overburdened foster care system.”

Herman said more people in the community are needed to speak up and make sure the children’s voices are heard, “and to help ensure that their stay in foster care is as short as possible and that they are placed in safe, loving homes quickly so they will begin to heal.”

Currently, more than 2,100 foster children have an advocate on their side, thanks to their ad litem volunteer.

“But,” Herman said, “there are more than 500 children currently unrepresented” by ad litem volunteers.

The unrepresented children are forced to go through the chaos of moving through the child protection system alone, Herman said.

“More volunteers are needed to step up and be a voice for children who desperately need them.”

To become a Voice for Children or Guardian ad Litem volunteer, go online at: [www.voicesbroward.org](http://www.voicesbroward.org), or call Herman at 954-831-5952.

The Voices for Children’s mailing address is: 10097 Cleary Blvd., Suite 70, Plantation, FL 33324.

#### COUPLE TRAVELS TO HAITI TO GET MUSIC CLASSES GOING

They pulled it off.

Several months ago, I made a plea for those of you who have workable musical instruments and sheet music to donate for a new musical program for children in Haiti.

Many of you responded. And on Aug. 16, Allison and Jason Novack traveled to Haiti to participate in the opening ceremonies to make music education available to children who did not otherwise have access to classes and musical instruments.

The Novacks are founders of 1308 Productions, a South Florida-based nonprofit organization devoted to public service, music education and supporting the development of the youth music scene, according to their website.

The couple brought dozens of new and used musical instruments and sheet music for beginners to help create a model music that can possibly be replicated in other communities.

I’m told it was a big day at City Hall in Tabarre, Haiti, where the Novacks were greeted by more than 150 children and about 100 adults in an outpouring of appreciation.

The Novacks told the audience about the value of music education for the future of the children in their communities. They said city officials made vows of sustained support by providing classroom

space, a music teacher, as well as maintenance and security for the instruments.

1308 Productions is planning another trip to Haiti in the near future to provide additional support to the music education and performance programs. There still is room for unused musical instrument or any other help you can provide.

You can reach the Novacks by sending an email to: [rock1308prod@aol.com](mailto:rock1308prod@aol.com).

#### VACCINATIONS SAVE LIVES, THE CDC SAYS

August is National Immunization Awareness Month and while the month is almost out, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention urges adults to get immunized against infectious diseases such as flu, Hepatitis A and B, and shingles.

“Vaccine-preventable diseases can make you very sick, and you may risk spreading the disease to family, friends, co-workers, and others,” said Cyn Davis from the CDC. “Older adults and people with weakened immune systems, such as those undergoing cancer treatment, are especially vulnerable to infectious diseases.”

People with diabetes also are at an increased risk of death from pneumonia and other infections.

Getting vaccinated is now easier than ever. Adults can be vaccinated at

doctors’ offices, pharmacies, workplaces, health clinics and health departments.

To find a vaccine provider near you, go online at: [vaccine.healthmap.org](http://vaccine.healthmap.org).

#### BUSINESSES PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS

Hats off to employees from Burger King Corp., headquarters and City Year, who used some of their summer fun days to plant flowers and paint walls to help make things a bit more pleasant for youngsters returning to Carol City Middle School.

As part of its “Global Day of Service,” the Burger King employees transformed the Northwest Miami-Dade school into a “positive educational environment,” according to a press release.

Also, City Year partners with public schools in high-poverty communities to help bridge the gap between what students need and what schools provide. In doing so, they help students reach their full potential and make it to graduation in communities across America.

#### WALKING EXTRA MILE FOR THE CHILDREN

Get ready for the 19th annual Extra Mile Walkathon, which benefits Christian Homes for Children, on Sept. 20.

The event starts at 8:30 a.m., and is sponsored by

Sunset Church of Christ, 12001 SW 72nd St.

The church is inviting families to participate by joining hands with Christian Homes for Children and/or sponsoring a walker who’s honoring the memory of someone special, or simply join other walkers at a location near you.

Thanks to the South Florida community, Christian Homes for Children has provided safe “homes of love” for more than 1,100 children in its 38 years of existence, said Mary Menzies, organization spokeswoman.

“We anticipate full participation in this spectacular free event that is open to the public,” she said. Donations are welcome and all proceeds will be used for destitute children, Menzies said.

For more information, call Menzies at 305-825-0517 or email Christian Homes for Children at [snzm2@aol.com](mailto:snzm2@aol.com).

You may download the event flyer and a sponsor pledge form at: [www.christianhomeforchildren.com](http://www.christianhomeforchildren.com).

*Send all items at least two weeks in advance to Friends and Neighbors, c/o Neighbors, 2000 NW 150th Ave., Suite 1105, Pembroke Pines, FL 33028, fax it to 954-538-7018 or email [bea.hines@gmail.com](mailto:bea.hines@gmail.com). Pictures are accepted but cannot be returned.*

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