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HELPING KIDS



Under-privileged kids from Wilmington attend a Blue Rocks game with Kind to Kids. BRAD GLAZIER PHOTO

Tickets please...

Charity founded by teen siblings gives underprivileged children chance to experience sports, arts and more.

KIND TO KIDS

Charity provides tickets to kids in need



LEFT: Catherine, Mark, Chris and Caroline Jones (left to right) are running the charity Kind to Kids as a family operation. RIGHT: Students from Urban Promise received tickets to a UD basketball game through Kind to Kids.

By Adam Zewe
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For many of the thousands of Delaware children living in poverty, hearing the soaring crescendo of an orchestra or the sharp crack of a professional baseball bat is something out of their wildest dreams.

But an Autumnwood family is working to make those dreams reality.

A little over a year ago, the Jones family founded Kind to Kids, an organization that donates event tickets to agencies that serve underprivileged children.

Sixteen-year-old Catherine Jones and her 18-year-old brother Chris got the idea for the charity while attending a basketball game. They noticed a lot of empty seats in the arena and wondered if those tickets could have been donated to kids in need, Catherine said.

She and her brother thought of underprivileged kids first because their mother, Caroline, works as a court appointed special advocate for foster children, she said.

Many foster kids have a real need for some fun and kindness, since most entering the system are coming into an unfamiliar home after being abused or neglected.

"It's a traumatic situation for the children," she said. "They're trying to function in their daily lives and go to school and do all the things a child needs to do while dealing with this trauma."

Enter Kind to Kids.

The organization works with venues such as the Wilmington Blue Rocks, Delaware Symphony Orchestra, Longwood Gardens and the Grand Opera House to collect tickets from events that didn't sell out, Caroline explained.

Then Kind to Kids donates those tickets to foster children and organizations that serve underprivileged kids, she said. Since last August, the organization has donated almost \$7,000 in tickets.

It is the only organization in Delaware that provides donated tickets to kids in need, she said.

"The organizations that donate, they don't want to have an empty stadium or theater," she said. "And they also want to help out the community and enjoy the goodwill that it brings to their organization."

Many of the kids would never be able

BY THE NUMBERS

26,817 Delaware children live in poor families

13 percent of kids live below the federal poverty level

\$21,200 is the poverty level for a family of four

800 Delaware kids are in foster care

to attend baseball games or orchestra concerts without the donated tickets, she said.

Sixty-one percent of kids who received donated tickets for a Blue Rocks game last August had never been to a baseball game before.

Being able to attend those kinds of events can be a big self esteem boost for kids who feel like no one cares about them, she said.

"It's all about bringing a smile back to a child's face, letting them forget their burdens and just be a kid again," Catherine said.

And word of Kind to Kids has been spreading.

A Delaware Family Court judge recognized that a foster child was interested in music and needed some direction in his life, Caroline said, so the court called Kind to Kids to ask about symphony tickets.

Kind to Kids provided tickets and the child's court advocate later wrote back that the smile the symphony brought to that child was incredible, Caroline said.

Running a charity has really shown her the goodness in people, she said.

Right now, the charity is a family operation, but Caroline is hoping to eventually be able to operate a storefront and hire a receptionist to help the group serve more kids. She'd also like to expand operations into Kent and Sussex counties, she said.

As long as there are kids in Delaware who are living in poverty, Kind to Kids will continue to be an important organization, she said.

"We're bringing these children a lasting memory of joy and you can't put a price tag on that," she said.



ABOVE: Catherine Jones paints faces at the Delaware Division of Family Services' summer picnic. RIGHT: Kids who receive tickets are asked to write thank-you notes to the venue. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

HOW YOU CAN HELP

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Online through the Delaware Community Foundation at www.delcf.org/donations2.php. On the site, type in "Kind to Kids Fund" and fill out the information form.

Cash and checks can also be mailed to Kind to Kids, P.O. Box 939, Hockessin, DE 19707.

Information about donating tickets, volunteering or helping to promote Kind to Kids, visit kindtokids.org.

