

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT



Ruston High School
Chapter 617
Louisiana
2018 - 2019

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Submitted by:

Jalia Payne,

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and

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“Even if it’s a little thing, do something for those who have need of a man’s help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it.” -Albert Schweitzer

Purpose of the Project

In 1636, the United States created its own version of the foster care system. Since then, approximately 500,000 children each year in the United States are in foster care at any given time. More than 23,000 children will age out of the US foster care system every year. After reaching the age of 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care were instantly homeless. Of the national average, 800 of them will age out in the state of Louisiana, with 100 coming from our North Louisiana region alone. The young adults are released from foster care at the age of 18 as opposed to their counterparts who are oftentimes still at home attending high school. In fact, research shows that 60% of human trafficking victims are or have been associated with foster care and were released into the world with little to no help assistance. Many fall victim to committing crimes and are put into the penal system serving time because they are trying to survive. Others do take a positive route and attend colleges and universities, but they are still in need of basic items that average teens often take for granted. These shocking numbers, along with the knowledge that several children in our communities, including students at our school, were clients of Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home, a facility specializing in child development, prompted the Ruston High School FBLA Chapter 617 to raise funds, collect necessities, and spread awareness for young adults aging out of foster care.

The members of RHS FBLA first became aware of the needs of young adults in foster care when a member of our school was revealed to have been taken out of the foster care program by his older brother who had previously aged out. Furthermore, after conducting extensive research, the group learned that several children in our city had aged out of the foster care program at the Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home. Because of the local connections such as these that we found, the chapter decided to work with the Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home, the closest facility to our community that specializes in dealing with children within the foster care system. In fact, its Life Skills Department and Foster Care Program are recognized among the highly rated programs in the state of Louisiana.



Project Goals

The primary goals of this project were to bring awareness about the hardships of aging out of foster care to the members of our communities and to express support for the young adults by supplying them with financial support and basic items needs. Because we personally have not gone through the system, we decided to get in contact with Mrs. Casey Morace, the director of the LMCH Life Skills Department. With Mrs. Morace's help, we gained an understanding of the challenges that the young adults who age out of the system face and were able to compile a list of items that would make the transition easier for them. Finally, we recognized that many people we knew, whether students or adults, did not realize the extent or impact of having young adults released from the foster care system into the world with little to no assistance. To address each of issue, the goals set by the project committee were as follows:

- Educate the Ruston / Lincoln Parish area about young adults aging out of the system
- Donate resources to young adults who age out of the foster care system, with a special focus on serving those that reside in Louisiana
- Supply goods needed to donate to those aging out of the system
- Make a monetary donation to help the young adults aging out of the system

Service to the Community and Its Citizens

Our project team decided on the name "The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future." This project was chosen to give back to a place that has given life and support to the young adults in our communities. This project provided gifts of support to the young adults who age out of the foster care program from the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home who go out into the world on their own. In addition, it promoted awareness of the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home services provided to local foster care youth. Finally, the project provided education on foster care through multiple means. By raising awareness and increasing education in our local community, we in turn help those aging out from the LMCH who often reside in apartments or the dorms at the local colleges.

Research on Community Needs

In researching why this project would benefit the community, we took the larger community into consideration because we recognized that members of our smaller local community make up a part of the population of those aging out of the system. The first step we took in researching was to talk to people we knew to determine the level of awareness they had about the future of the teens who age out.



While some knew people within the foster care system or people who were fostering children, they had limited knowledge of the foster care system itself, let alone the challenges that young adults aging out of the system face. We also found that at Ruston High School alone, there were several students whom we knew who are or were part of the foster care system. Because most people don't discuss personal subjects like the foster care system in everyday conversations, we found this significant as there was certainly a flaw in how the system handles young adults who age out that we don't know about, and several of our classmates would go through this process soon. Both factors reinforced our decision to make education and awareness as one of our primary goals.

Next, we researched how we could best serve these young adults. We had to find out what items they needed the most. We obtained an initial list of the basic needs of those aging out from Mrs. Morace, the director of the Life Skills Department at the LMCH, and this enabled us to tailor our donation to items that would be attainable and beneficial. It also ensured that we spent our money most effectively. The next step was to build our flyer to seek donations. We worked closely with the LMCH to fully understand the impact of each item on the list, as well as comprehend just how hard it is for young adults who age out of the system with little to no help afterwards. With all the research done, we felt ready to plan and develop our project.

Planning and Development of the Project

The first step in planning the project was meeting with our adviser, Mr. Lloyd Bruner and with our RHS FBLA officer team to discuss the details of the project. After we received approval and agreed on the specifics for the project, we received official approval for our community service project from our principal, Mr. Daniel Gressett. We then met again with all officers and members to construct an implementation plan. At that point we were able to finalize plans, establish how many members would be needed, and determine what resources would be required to make this endeavor a success.

To raise money for our project and to bring awareness of foster care to our local communities, the chapter coordinated with Super 1 Foods and used the LMCH buttons, pens, and highlighter sets as incentives for donations. Moreover, members made personal contributions to the funds collection.

Next, we planned to have members collect household items from community members to give to the young adults aging out of the foster care program at LMCH. We decided on six groups of necessary items to gather for distribution to the young adults: 1) Bathroom, 2) Kitchen, 3) Living Room, 4) Bedroom, 5) Personal Hygiene, and 6) Miscellaneous. With Ms. Morace's assistance, we



were able to determine the best items to provide, as she has spent years working with the young adults who must leave the Methodist Children's Home.

Having planned how to raise the funds, we developed a plan to package and transport the items to the LMCH for delivery. After successful planning meetings, the team put the project in motion by creating official request letters (Appendix A) and setting our fundraising plans into motion.

Implementation of the Project

Part I: Fundraising

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future Project went into action on November 1, 2018, as the chapter began the distribution of flyers and official letters throughout the local communities asking for monetary gifts and item donations through its first community fundraising date. Chapter members collected and accepted donations while providing information on aging out of foster care. A community fundraising day was held at Super 1 Foods on November 10, 2018. The community showed its support for our project by donating \$1,351.00 plus several items from our list to help the young adults at LMCH.



Non-Monetary donations collected after Super 1 fundraiser.

The second phase of fundraising began on November 15, with individual commitments to monetary donations. Every member participated in collecting donations while talking to friends and family members to share with them information on aging out of foster care. In total, \$1,266.00 was raised. At the conclusion of all fundraising efforts, 81 members or 100% participated and helped to bring our grand total collected to \$2,617.00. As a reward for the members who brought \$5 or more back to the project the chapter decided to hold a pen ceremony where the members were presented with a Hope Chest pen provided by LMCH.



Members collecting their Hope Chest pens during the pen ceremony.

We also included non-monetary fundraising by incorporating other local FBLA chapters into our outreach. On December 8, 2018, our chapter hosted a FBLA Fall Leadership Retreat to help members learn ways to become more successful in FBLA. The price of admission for this day-long event was an item listed on the Hope Chest flyer that would be donated to the young adults of LMCH. This event



gave us another opportunity to share information about foster care and our Hope Chest project. Forty-five FBLA members from Ruston High School, Choudrant High School, Ruston Jr. High School, and I.A. Lewis School registered to attend. Each participant donated one of the requested items and received credit for participating in a community service project.

Several college professors who heard about the project made an appeal to their students to support this worthy cause. One professor reported that a student shared in confidence that he was an individual who had just aged out of the foster care system. Professors from the History, English, and Social Work Departments at one of the local colleges introduced the idea to their students. Approximately 180 to 200 students donated basic need items to the cause. Gratitude was expressed to the group for their efforts.



Students from Grambling State University donating items.

Part II: Presentation



Team members Jalia Payne, Hana Le, and Amanda Meng presenting the “big” check to Ms. Morace along with the collected items.

On Wednesday, December 19, at 8:00 a.m., the delivery phase of our project went into effect. All items were loaded for delivery to LMCH. This included tooth brushes, tooth paste, towels, soap, lamps, pots and pans, and wall decor. All fourteen chapter officers, three of our parents, and the advisor Mr. Bruner transported the items we had collected to the LMCH. We were met by the LMCH council and reporters from a local news station KTVE, newspaper Ruston Daily

Leader, and the LMCH social media staff, who recorded the presentation and conducted interviews of our project team to promote our donation as well as to get the word out in northern Louisiana about the mission and needs of LMCH and the young adults aging out. The project team presented the collected items and a “big” check for \$2,617 to Ms. Morace and the council in the Chapel of LMCH. The presentation was open to the public to learn more about the project and get information on how to help even though the project had been concluded.



Part III: Education of Local Community

While the delivery of physical items to LMCH clients is an immediate, visible, and welcome impact, our officer team wanted to do even more. They didn't feel it was enough to help the young adults without educating the public more fully on foster care and the need for monetary and item support to produce long-term change. Therefore, the Community Service Project (CSP) Team took steps to achieve that goal. First, after some research, we discovered that National Giving Tuesday is observed each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Next, we contacted Mayor Ronny Walker of Ruston, Louisiana, to request that he issue a proclamation establishing observance of that day in Ruston. Mayor Walker readily agreed and hosted the RHS FBLA officer team at his office on November 26, 2018, to present them with the proclamation. Additionally, the project team contacted the office of Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards to issue a similar proclamation to cover the entire state during that week, a request that also was granted. However, the members didn't want to stop there. We also contacted Mayor Edward R. Jones of Grambling, Louisiana and Louisiana Representative Patrick O. Jefferson of District 11 to request a proclamation establishing observance of Giving Tuesday in Grambling and District 11 respectively. (Appendix B)

With those four proclamations in place, the CSP team contacted local radio station KPCH to



Team members Hana Le, Amanda Meng, and Jalia Payne visit with Rick Godley on KPCH.

request a spot on its morning show to share with its listeners about foster care, the effects of aging out, and the project RHS FBLA had just completed. Team members Jalia Payne, Amanda Meng, and Hana Le joined host Rick Godley on the mornings of August 28 and December 5, 2018 to share more about foster care and to ask for support from the public.

Another major element of the education aspect was to bring awareness to the Ruston High School community.

On Giving Tuesday, an announcement was made through the school that highlighted aging out of foster care and Giving Tuesday. More than 1450 students and faculty were reached the day that announcement was made. Additionally, the project team wanted the chapter to show more support for Giving Tuesday by requesting and joining the #GivingTuesday campaign. (Appendix B)



Publicity Received

The Hope Chest project received a great deal of publicity through several outlets as a result of a strategic publicity plan. Members targeted the local newspaper, radio stations in Louisiana, social media sites such as Facebook, and the use of school announcements in broadcasting information.

Radio

On August 28, 2018, Senior Vice President Jalia Payne and Chapter President Joanna Ham broadcasted an interview with Rick Godley on KPCH radio regarding the LMCH. Awareness was raised on the topic of children aging out of foster homes and our upcoming community service project. On December 5, Hana Le (Sophomore Vice President) and Amanda Meng (Treasurer) accompanied Payne a second time to the KPCH radio station, which featured a more extensive interview about our project plans and goals. The team answered questions about the foster care system and encouraged the community to contribute to the Hope Chest. This was an effective outreach as KPCH has a weekly audience of 35,000 listeners in a 50-mile radius, which includes those living on the Louisiana / Arkansas border. In addition, the interview was broadcasted on Facebook Live, increasing the reach of their message.

Social Media

The students also requested that the Mayor of Ruston, Ronny Walker, sign a proclamation recognizing Giving Tuesday in Ruston, which was accepted by Ruston High FBLA officers on November 26. Governor John Bel Edwards of Louisiana also approved our request for recognition and sent the Ruston High chapter the state proclamation for Giving Tuesday. The CSP team then visited Mayor Edward Jones of Grambling, and he too joined in our efforts to bring awareness to the importance of giving through a proclamation showing observance of Giving Tuesday in Grambling. Further, State Representative Patrick O. Jefferson also showed his support through a proclamation from the region of District 11. On December 5, the CSP team participated in an interview with Rick Godley on the KPCH radio station that was broadcasted on Facebook Live, KPCH followed by 2500 people, and shared by the FBLA-PBL National Center on Facebook, followed by over 14,000 people. (Appendix B) Additionally, information and pictures related to the proclamations and the overall project were shared on Facebook by those associated with the chapter. The project was also featured on the Local News KTVE on December 19 and posted on its website.



Newspaper

To reach a different demographic, Ruston High FBLA submitted an article about the Hope Chest project to the local newspaper, *The Ruston Daily Leader*. Published on December 19, 2018, this article covered all aspects of the project, from implementation to delivery to education of the community (Appendix D). The paper claims a readership of approximately 15,000. Additionally, Ruston High FBLA had six different articles over several months in the school newspaper, *The Chatterbox*, that was incorporated into *The Ruston Daily Leader*.

School Resources

On November 27, our team made an announcement over the school's intercom in honor of Giving Tuesday. Over 1400 students were made aware of the problems faced by those released from foster care and were encouraged to spread the word and help by donating money or supplies.

Impact and Benefits to the Community

The project brought awareness and education to our local community about children aging out of foster care, a problem within our city and the United States as well. Through our various announcements and radio interviews, we were able to reach over 1,400 students in our high school and approximately 35,000 members of our community who listened to KPCH Radio. Moreover, the local news station KTVE is broadcasted throughout south Arkansas, north Louisiana, and western Mississippi known as the ARK-LA-MISS region.

- The project brought awareness to the challenges faced by those who age out of foster care with no monetary aid or supplies.
- The project acted as a fundraiser, providing items needed by many aging out of foster care. A plethora of items such as clothes, toothbrushes, dishes, and sheets were donated to the Hope Chest with a total of \$2617 being raised to purchase any other items that were needed.
- The project allowed members of our local communities to assist children at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home through the donation of money or items at our multiple fundraisers throughout the community. Awareness was spread through our presence at public places along with informational cards about the project itself that provided a list of the items that would be accepted by the LMCH and contact information.



- The project brought publicity to our local community of Ruston, Louisiana and other surrounding areas in North Louisiana.
- The project emphasized and publicized the message that everyone can do something to help those without the same support and advantages that they have.
- The project allowed the community to come together for a single cause. Students at Ruston High, especially those who are a part of the Ruston High FBLA Chapter, students from Grambling State University, various churches, and other residents of Ruston were informed about the project and understood the importance of giving to those in need.

Evaluation of the Project

Our Hope Chest project was very successful. The chapter raised more than \$2600 in donations to help. In addition, our education campaign reached thousands of people through direct contact, radio, newspaper, local news, school announcements, and social media. Because we plan to continue this project in the future, we have identified several ways we can improve our impact:

1. Record a PSA to distribute to radio stations for Giving Tuesday. The PSA can be sent to stations throughout Louisiana to coincide with the state proclamation.
2. Record a video for social media to promote our project. This will increase the outreach and donations so that we can do even more to help the young adults who age out.
3. Create social media pages so that the public can follow the project's progression and ask questions on how to help.
4. Conduct a simple pre-test / post-test at Ruston High School to evaluate the effectiveness of our school announcements.

Our project was so successful that not only did we collect more funds than anticipated, we continue to receive donations after further outreach. We have decided that we will check with LMCH periodically to see if they need more items for the young adults. When they begin to run low, we will replenish them as needed rather than allow some young adults to go without.



Appendix A: Request Letter and Presentation

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

Supplies needed for youth aging out of foster care are listed below. We hope that these items will impact lives. Thank you for your support!

<p>Bathroom Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shower curtain <input type="checkbox"/> Towels <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Rugs <input type="checkbox"/> Trash cans <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet scrubbers <p>Personal Hygiene Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Deodorant 	<p>Living Room Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Surge Protectors <input type="checkbox"/> Lamps <input type="checkbox"/> Light Bulbs <input type="checkbox"/> Extension Cords <input type="checkbox"/> Wall Decor <p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> New Clothing Items <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Certificates/Gift Cards 	<p>Bedroom Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding <input type="checkbox"/> Pillows <input type="checkbox"/> Air Mattresses <input type="checkbox"/> Curtains <input type="checkbox"/> Area Rugs 	<p>Kitchen Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Silverware <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Dish drainer/rack <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Foil <input type="checkbox"/> Storage Containers <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking Utensils <input type="checkbox"/> Trashcan <input type="checkbox"/> Broom <input type="checkbox"/> Trash Bags <input type="checkbox"/> Cookware <input type="checkbox"/> Microwave <input type="checkbox"/> Hand Soap <input type="checkbox"/> Rubber Gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Mop <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Products
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Monetary donation may be sent to:
 Louisiana Methodists Children's Home
 Attn: Hope Chest
 904 DeVillle Lane
 Ruston, LA 71270.

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future
presented by Jalia Payne, Hana Le, and Amanda Meng

Our project is titled **The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future**. By working with Mrs. Casey Morace at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home, our chapter decided that this project was a great opportunity for us to help others who don't have the same support and advantages that we have. The purpose of our project is to provide young adults who are aging out of foster care from the Methodist Children's Home with items that they may need when they go out into the world on their own. Please continue to give to the LMCH and The Hope Chest and please spread the word.

Please see the reverse of this card for a list of items needed to help the **The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future**. All donations are appreciated.

Contact Information: Louisiana Methodists Children's Home, Attn: Casey Morace, Hope Chest, 904 DeVillle Lane, Ruston, LA 71270.
 Phone: (318) 242-4687 or (318) 957-2278 Email: casey.morace@luscsl.net or casey.morace@lmch.org

RHS FBLA
presents
The Hope Chest:
Fostering the Future
Community Service Project
In partnership with the
Louisiana Methodist Children's
Home
December 19, 2018
9:30 am
904 DeVillle Lane, Ruston, LA

Chapter 617
Ruston High School
900 Bearcat Drive
Ruston, Louisiana 71270
lbruner@lincolnschools.org

To whom this may concern,

My name is Jalia Payne, and I am writing on behalf of Ruston High FBLA. Our organization is a service organization run by high school students learning about the business world and creating projects to help improve the community.

This year, our Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter is currently working on a project that helps teenagers who are aging out of foster care from the Methodist Children's Home receive the necessary items they may need in order to live on their own.

In order to make a difference, we rely on the support of generous individuals and businesses in our community like you. We would be grateful if you could either provide a monetary donation or donate any of the items on the attached flyer.

Your support is critical to the completion of our project, and we will gladly keep you updated regarding our progress should you wish.

Please contact Mr. Bruner at lbruner@lincolnschools.org if you can support our efforts to make a difference in the community. Thank you so much for your kind consideration of our request, and we hope to hear from you soon.

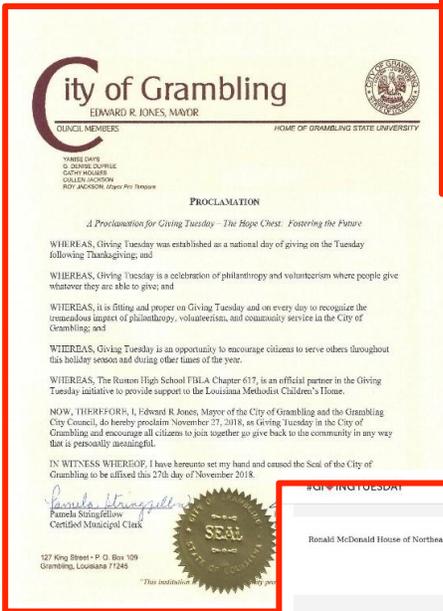
Sincerely,

Jalia Payne

Jalia Payne
Community Service Project Manager
RHS FBLA



Appendix B: Proclamations for Giving Tuesday



GIVING TUESDAY			
Ronald McDonald House of Northeast Louisiana	Nonprofit	Website (318) 387-7922	200 South 3rd St. Monroe, Louisiana
Ruston Farmers Market/North Louisiana Farm Fresh	Nonprofit	Website	Ruston, Louisiana
Ruston High School Future Business Leaders of America	School	Website (318) 233-0827	200 Bearcat Dr. Ruston, Louisiana
Sacred Heart of Jesus	Faith based Organization	Website	Pinville, Louisiana



Appendix C: Newspaper and Media

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

RHS FBLA Community Service Project

by Jalia Payne / Business Manager

After the support given throughout the Arkansas Children's Hospital project, the Ruston High School (RHS) Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Chapter 617, would like to present our new project - The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future. The purpose of our project is to provide young adults who are aging out of foster care at the age of 18 from the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home with items that they may require when they transition out of the program.

Each year, in Louisiana, approximately 800 young adults age out of foster care, with nearly 100 of those coming from our local region alone. The young adults are released from foster care at the age of 18, often while they are still in high school. After attending a local seminar on human trafficking, it came to our attention that 60% of human trafficking victims are, or have been, associated with foster care and were released into the world with little to no help afterwards. Our chapter wants to do what we can to help and to bring awareness of the needs of the many young adults who age out of the foster care program.

As some of the young adults have or are currently attending Ruston High School, our chapter wanted to show support for them as they are at a disadvantage compared to many others their age. We are looking for either monetary donations or donations of needed items. We will be collecting monetary donations on Nov. 10, 2018 at Super 1. We will also be collecting product donations in various locations as well, and will provide more details in the next edition of *Chatterbox*. Until then, if you wish to make a monetary or product donation or need more information, please contact our FBLA chapter adviser, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.



Jalia Payne, Hana Le, and Amanda Meng will lead this year's FBLA Community Service Project - The Hope Chest.

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

by Jalia Payne / FBLA Community Service Project Team Leader



Ruston High School's FBLA Community Service project is still under way. In partnership with the Methodist Children's Home, the Hope Chest is a resource for teenagers aging out of foster care that will allow them to set up housekeeping on their own. We have already received support from individuals, groups, and organizations throughout the Ruston community. Ruston High School FBLA held a fundraiser at Super One on November 10, 2018. We had a very successful day, with many community members purchasing household items as they shopped or donating funds to this important project. So far we have raised just over \$1400 and have received several bins of household items. We would like to formally thank everyone who donated to our cause in the form of either buying the requested items or providing a monetary donation. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Despite the help we have already received, we are still in need of more support and donations to be able to fully stock the Hope Chest. We have received some of the requested items, but we are still looking for more items within the following categories: kitchen, living room, and bedroom. We plan to continue our collection process on November 27, 2018, which is National Giving Tuesday. Please continue to send monetary donations and needed items to help the teenagers aging out of foster care from the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home. Monetary donations can be sent to RHS FBLA, 900 Bearcat Drive, Ruston, Louisiana 71720.

On Dec. 8, 2018, our chapter will host the 2nd Annual RHS FBLA Leadership Retreat at the Gospel Inc. FBLA officers and members throughout our area will be learning best practices in FBLA. This will include leadership, awards, competition, and of course, service. The fee to attend this event is simply a donation to the project to receive this training opportunity from the top FBLA chapter and leaders in the state. Everyone attending will also receive a great lunch provided by the Louisiana Army National Guard.

On Dec. 13, 2018, the chapter will close out the project as every chapter member will turn in dedicated contributions during the RHS FBLA December chapter meeting. Every member has made a commitment of at least \$1, with some dedicating over \$100 to the project.

Our chapter is tentatively scheduled to present our donations on Dec. 19, 2018, to the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home (LMCH). The schedule includes a presentation to the LMCH, with special guests and dignitaries present for the event, including local media.

If you would like to help or if you have any questions, please email the RHS FBLA advisor, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.

myarklamiss.com
yarklamiss.com
Local News
Students from Ruston High are lending a helping hand to teens who are aging out of foster care
By: Jonathon Freeman
Updated: Dec 15, 2018 08:11 PM CST

FBLA-PBL National Center
The Peach 99.3 was live.
December 5 at 8:09 AM
FBLA-PBL National Center FBLA Ruston High School Jalia, Amanda & Hana talk with Rick Godley about... Continue Reading



collect donations for the Hope Chest Project. Pictures above are from the RHS FBLA Nov. 10, 2018 fundraiser/collections effort.

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

by Jalia Payne / FBLA Community Service Project Team Leader



When children cannot return home to their families, child welfare systems must move quickly to find them alternative homes. As time goes by, the prospects for landing in safe, loving, permanent homes grow dimmer for foster youth. On any given day, there are 500,000 children and youth in the foster care system. Instead of security and stability, these young people are subjected to situations that change frequently. Many will simply "age out" of the system when they turn 18, without a family and without the skills to make it on their own.

In 2016, more than 17,000 young people - whom states failed to reunite with their families or place in permanent homes - aged out of foster care, simply because they were too old to remain. Youth who age out of foster care are less likely than those in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college. By age 26, approximately 80 percent of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or GED compared to 94 percent of the general population. By age 26, only 4 percent of young adults who aged out of foster care earned a 4-year college degree, while 36 percent of those in the general population had done so.

Ruston High School Future Business Leaders of America is raising funds and collecting items like electrical cords, air mattresses, pillows, blankets, etc. to give to the youth who are aging out of foster care from the Louisiana Children's Methodist Home here in Ruston. Through your donation and your generous gifts, we can offer much needed support to those individuals.

If there are any questions, please email the advisor, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.



The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

by Jalia Payne/ FBLA Community Service Project Team Leader



Jalia Payne, Amanda Meng, and Hana Le discuss The Hope Chest with Rick Godley on KPCH Radio.

The Ruston High School FBLA chapter's Community Service Project team recently appeared on KPCH Radio to discuss their project, The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future. The team of Jalia Payne, Amanda Meng, and Hana Le discussed the project with host Rick Godley and shared how the community could help. The Hope Chest will provide household items to young people aging out of the foster care system.

The project was officially presented on December 19, 2018. Our FBLA chapter presented all monetary donations and items to the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home Board of Directors, with dignitaries present as well as media. With the support we received from the community, we were able to provide a trailer load of household items, as well as a check for \$2,617.00. We would like to say thank you to everyone who came to witness this presentation of The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future. For any part that you have played, whether it was a donation or words of encouragement, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We would also like to thank Governor John Bel Edwards of Louisiana, State Representative Patrick O. Jefferson of District 11, Mayor Ronny Walker of Ruston, LA, and Mayor Edward Jones of Grambling, LA, for proclaiming November 27, 2018, as National Giving Tuesday in their respective zones. The support is greatly appreciated.

While the project has been presented, the needs for the Hope Chest never end. If you would still like to contribute, you may do so by contacting Mrs. Casey Morace at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home at casey.morace@luxsci.net or casey.morace@lmch.org by email, or call (318) 242-4687 or (318) 957-2278. You may also email the Ruston High School FBLA adviser, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

by Jalia Payne/ FBLA Community Service Project Team Leader



The RHS FBLA officer team receives an official proclamation from Mayor Ronnie Walker proclaiming Tuesday, November 27, 2018 as Giving Tuesday in the City of Ruston.

The Ruston High School FBLA chapter has been publicizing the Hope Chest: Fostering the Future for the last couple of months. Our adviser, Mr. Lloyd R. Bruner, has established a Giving Tuesday fundraiser to assist with funds for the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home. Mrs. Morace and others at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home and several friends and families have been involved via Facebook. The social media personnel at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home has also been promoting this project with us.

Ruston High School FBLA contacted Ruston Mayor Ronnie Walker as well as Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards concerning official proclamations naming Tuesday, November 27, 2018, as Giving Tuesday, which we linked to our project. Governor Edwards approved and sent our chapter the state proclamation for Giving Tuesday. On Monday, November 26, 2018, we visited Mayor Walker and were presented with a proclamation from the city of Ruston, as well. At school, our team announced both proclamations and gave an overview of Giving Tuesday and The Hope Chest Project.

If you would like to support the project, we are still collecting monetary donations until December 13, 2018. On December 19, 2018, our FBLA chapter will officially present all donations and items to the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home Board of Directors, with dignitaries present as well as media. We will present the "big check" as well as all the items collected over this project.

If there are any questions, please email the advisor, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.

The Hope Chest: Fostering the Future

by Jalia Payne/ FBLA Community Service Project Team Leader



Ruston High School's FBLA Community Service project is underway. Our goal this year is to provide resources for young people at the Methodist Children's Home who are aging out of foster care. Tens of thousands of children in the foster care system were taken away from their parents after extreme abuse, and many never return home but simply age out of the foster care system. Most people don't think of homeless teenagers when they hear about young adults aging out of foster care. However, after reaching the age of 18, 20 percent of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless. Only one out of every two foster youths who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24. Seven out of ten girls who age out of the foster care system will become pregnant before the age of 21. So, it is time for us all to be more aware of what happens to young people who age out of the foster care system and offer as much support as we can.

In order to help these young people, who are the same age as most high school seniors, we are collecting household items to put into "The Hope Chest" at the Methodist Children's Home. Affected youth will then be able to select items they need to set up housekeeping on their own. To date, we have received support from a number of individuals, groups, and organizations throughout the Ruston community. Despite the help we have already received, we are still in need of more support and donations. To serve our focus group, we are looking for basic household items for kitchen, living room, and bedroom. Suggested items include pots, pans, utensils, small kitchen appliances, linens, air mattresses, and lamps. Donated items should be new or like new condition.

FBLA members will be at Super 1 Foods in Ruston from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. on Saturday, November 10, 2018, selling awareness bracelets to raise money for this important project. We can also take any donated items at this time. If you can help, we look forward to seeing you that day! The deadline to receive any donations is Tuesday, November 27, 2018.

If there are any questions, please email the advisor, Mr. Lloyd Bruner, at lbruner@lincolnschools.org.



Appendix D: Thank You Letter From LMCH



Louisiana Methodist Children's Home
904 Deville Lane
PO Box 929
Ruston, LA 71273-0929
Phone: (318) 255-5575 Fax: (318) 255-5457
Website: LMCH.org

December 31, 2018

Ruston High School
900 Bearcat Dr
Ruston, LA 71270

Dear Ruston High School:

Thank you for your generous gift to Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services in the amount of \$2,617.00 in support of the Life Skills Hope Chest program.

We are committed to serving the hurting children and families of Louisiana. Our innovative and life-changing programs really do change lives!

Thanks to your prayers and support we will continue to serve God, the children and their families, our community and one another as we always have.

Warm regards,



Rick Wheat
President and CEO

Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization, has not provided any goods or services, in whole or in part, to you in consideration for this voluntary monetary contribution. In addition to this acknowledgement letter, you will receive a tax statement in January of next year if you wish to claim the tax deductibility of this gift.



Our Mission: We Guide Children and Families Home to Experience God's Love by Following the Teachings of Christ.

