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LOOKING TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Thanks to Rainbow Days

By Alicia Wanek

You’ve probably had *one of those days* at work before. You had something on your mind and didn’t sleep well the night before and now you’re trying to stay focused and productive for a full eight hours. Imagine being ten years old, having spent the night on a bed you’re sharing with your two sisters on the floor in a motel with the sound of gunshots outside and little more than a

cereal bar for breakfast. How can that child stay focused at school all day when she is stressed, tired, and hungry? That child is named Katelyn, but thanks to the support she and her sisters are getting from Rainbow Days, they are better prepared to face each day. This organization makes it their mission to “help children and youth in adversity build coping skills and resili-



“I FEEL SAD ABOUT THIS SOMETIMES. BUT MY RAINBOW DAYS’ TEACHER, MRS. HERSHEY, LETS ME KNOW THAT I AM NOT ALONE IN MY PROBLEMS.”
- Katelyn

Thanks to Rainbow Days, sisters Katelyn, Kimora and Kaliece have had the opportunity to “just be kids” in a safe and caring environment away from the motel where they live.

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ience to create positive futures.” Now age twelve Katelyn says, “The hardest thing about where we live is that we don’t have any privacy. I feel sad about this sometimes. But my Rainbow Days’ teacher, Mrs. Hershey, lets me know that I am not alone in my problems.” Rainbow Days is a non-profit outreach organization that believes that by helping children learn and practice healthy self-management and relationship and decision-making skills with positive adult role models, they can help break the cycles of poverty, abuse, homelessness, and dysfunction. Katelyn, Kimora, and Kaliece are proving that it can. The girls have been part of several of Rainbow Days’ outreach programs over the years. They have received meals, new backpacks, school supplies, Christmas gifts, and school uniforms. They have been part of an after-school program with support groups and help with homework, on special outings with caring adult mentors, and they’ve participated in summer camps to explore math, science, and the arts. Most importantly, they’ve had the opportunity to “just be kids” in a safe and caring environment away from the motel where they live. “These girls are beautiful examples of the impact that Rainbow Days’ programs and caring adults can have on children experiencing adversity,” reports Kelly Wierzbinski, Director of Family Connection at Rainbow Days. The girls are doing better in school and meeting new friends, but the biggest sign that the programs are making a difference is evident in the girls’ own statements about their future. Kaliece, age 11, says, “At Rainbow Days, I have learned to have confidence and to follow my dreams. When I grow up, I want to be a police officer.” It’s so important to know that adults believe in them, that they help them see the importance of setting goals, and to instill in them the self-esteem to know they can accomplish what they set their minds to. As Sherri Ansley, CEO of Rainbow Days sees it, “The children and youth we work with are the future. One day, they will be the mayors, doctors, teachers and business leaders of our community. It is important for Rainbow Days to be part of creating that future.” For these three resilient young girls, there are very bright days ahead.

Rainbow Days’ 22nd annual Pot of Gold Luncheon featuring keynote speaker Marlee Matlin is slated to raise \$250,000 to support the 37-year-old nonprofit organization’s mission to help children and youth in adversity build coping skills and resilience to create positive futures. Launched in 1982 by Founder Cathey Brown to support children whose families were overcoming addiction, Rainbow Days has expanded services to include: life-enrichment experiences; family outings; mentored events; and an array of alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) prevention programs. To date, Rainbow Days has served more than 220,000 children in the Dallas community. In addition, more than 55,000 professionals across Dallas, the state of Texas, the nation and beyond have been trained to implement Rainbow Days’ nationally recognized Curriculum-Based Support Groups® or other accredited prevention programs with children in their own communities through The Trans4m Center.



Marlee Matlin

Rainbow Days depends on the support of over 1,000 volunteers each year. For more information on volunteering, contact Sunni Roaten, Volunteer Manager, at sunnir@rainbowdays.org. In addition to financial donations, the organization is always in need of snacks and pizza gift cards, school supplies, and small toys and prizes. To make a donation contact Tiffany Beaudine, Director of Development at tiffanyb@rainbowdays.org.