Home > Duluth project collects loads of luggage for foster care kids on the move
Duluth project collects loads of luggage for foster care kids on the move

Duluth News Tribune, by Sam Cook, June 2nd, 2010, DULUTH MN -

These days, working at Lutheran Social Service comes with a lot of baggage.
Old but dependable bags. New-with-the-tags-on bags.
They're stacked everywhere in the LSS offices that are part of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church on Sixth Avenue East.
"My goal was 50 bags," said Nicki Patnaude, program director for the Oh No Eighteen Program, part of Lutheran Social Service. "We've collected, at last count, 386 bags."
The mother lode of luggage is the result of a project conducted by the Oh No Eighteen Program based in Duluth and Virginia. The program teaches independent living skills to foster children ages 16 to 20 who are leaving foster care families or beginning life on their own.
Most foster kids have never owned luggage, Patnaude said.
As part of National Foster Care Month in May, Patnaude's Youth Leadership Council came up with the idea of collecting used luggage for foster children. The leadership council is made up of four former foster kids: Donna Stavig, Crystal Deputy, Ray Jackson and Corey Lundstrom, all from Duluth.
Patnaude, 24, asked them how they had moved all their possessions from one home placement to another as foster children.
"Every single youth said, 'Garbage bags,' " she said. "I said, 'How does that make you feel?' "
"Like garbage," the kids told her.
So, the luggage drive was on. With posters at area Lutheran churches and notices in the news media, word traveled fast. And the bags started coming to the modest offices at Gloria Dei. The drive ended Wednesday, and still the bags are coming, Patnaude said.
"The outpouring has been amazing," she said. "We just have a huge appreciation for this community."
The Oh No Eighteen program will contact social workers and foster-care parents so foster children can come to pick up the luggage. Patnaude isn't sure that all the luggage will be placed with kids at this time, and the rest will be stored for future foster-care children, she said.

Original article, retrieved on June 8th, 2010