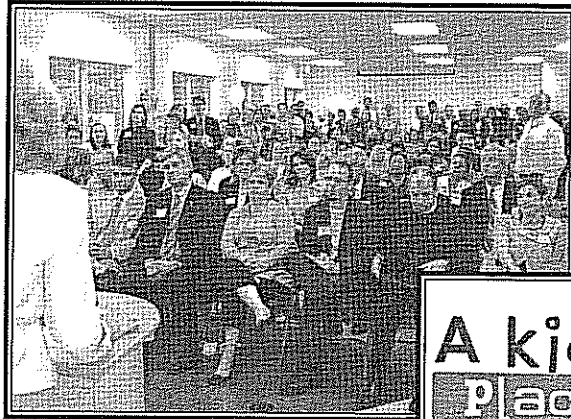


SAFE HAVEN FOR CHILDREN NOW OPEN

By Carisa Biesecker



HUNDREDS OF SUPPORTERS CAME OUT TO THE RECENT GRAND OPENING OF A KID'S PLACE IN BRANDON, OFFERING ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY SIBLINGS, A SAFE PLACE TO RESIDE.

the names of Lithia residents Brenda and Joe Sullivan's Sammy Sullivan Charities and LazyDays Partners Foundation welcome attendees into two of the homes, each having raised \$400,000 as a house sponsor for the

organization.

Walking through the bedrooms, handmade quilts adorn the beds and

various rooms throughout the

administrative building are marked with the memory of a loved one as well as organizations within our community.

"DCF [Department of Children and Families] was asking for a facility like this for 15 years, and no one stepped to the plate, so our board stepped to the plate," stated former Hillsborough County Commissioner Berger MacKinnon, who also founded the Joshua House, a shelter for children who have been abused and neglected in Tampa. "I want to say thank you to the board for stepping forward and accepting that challenge."

As prayers were said by Reverend Doug Sharf of Holy Innocents Episcopal Church and Associate Pastor of Student Ministry Scott Odom of Bell Shoals Baptist Church, Odum commented that Bell Shoals' Senior Pastor, Dr. Forrest Pollock, had always been an advocate of

the center, adding, "We pray this will be an incredible refuge for those kids."

Having had the guidance of the child welfare system since the facility's conception, DCF Regional Director Nick Cox added, "We truly appreciate the help...What am I saying, we're DCF, of course we appreciate the help."

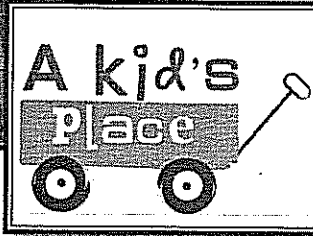
Also in attendance were Hillsborough Kids, Inc. Executive Director Jeff Rainey, Hillsborough County Sheriff David Gee, Chief Judge Manny Menendez, judges Katherine Essrig, Tracy Sheehan, Herb Baumann and Martha Cook, Hillsborough County Commissioner Rose Ferlita, Superintendent of Schools MaryEllen Eila, Dr. Diane Straub, chief of Adolescent Medicine at USF Pediatrics, contractor and co-founder Greg Johnson, president of Precise Construction and Audie Canney, legislative aide to Senator Ronda Storms.

Residing within the facility for up to

30 days, each child's medical, dental, psychological and personal needs will be evaluated by staff, with Straub heading up the center's 24-hour clinic and Major Rob Bullara of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office in charge of the onsite Child Protective Investigations.

Those who would like to volunteer their time or finance the continuance of services as well as the facility itself, being that \$1 million is still needed in order to complete payment on the \$5 million center, can e-mail kidscharity@yahoo.com or call 263-3469. Items still needed by the organization can be found at Bed Bath & Beyond, registry number 6689332, or Target online or in-store at TargetLists, entering "Kids" for the first name and "Charity" for the last name.

A Kid's Place is located on five acres at 1715 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. in Brandon. To learn more, visit www.kidscharitytb.com or call 381-3839.



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