



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Elisa D'Angelo

352.256.1893

ElisaMDangelo@aol.com

JUNIOR LEAGUE HOSTS PANEL ON TRANSITIONAL INDEPENDENT LIVING

Davie, FL – State legislators and local agencies were represented at a recent panel at Nova University created by the Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale to educate members about the need for services for teenagers who have aged out of the foster care system.

“Many children in foster care wake up on their 18th birthday and hear ‘Happy Birthday! You’re 18. Here’s your little bag of belongings. You’re on your own now,’” said Peter Balitsaris, President of ChildNet. “These kids don’t have a home, like you or I do, they stay someplace. They’ve stayed in different homes throughout their life and after they turn 18, they’ll continue to just stay in different places. The Junior League facility will be a place where those kids can go – an emotional home where they are safe.”

The Junior League has committed to creating a Transitional Independent Living Youth Center for teenagers in Broward County who have aged out of the foster care system.

“Broward County has a lot of services for teens, but they are located all across the county and it’s extremely difficult for anyone to navigate that system,” said Elizabeth Wynter, Transitional Independent Living Coordinator at the United Way. “What the Junior League will create will be a place where all those services can exist.”

The Youth Center will be a single facility where students can go to meet with a Life Coach to get life advice – how to do laundry, balance a check book, etc. – and to receive assistance finding an apartment or a job.

For Latoya, a former foster child who is now a senior at FAU studying to one day be a social worker, having a Life Coach has made a huge difference.

“She’s been with me for 5 years,” said Latoya. “She’s been with me every step of the way, helping me answer basic questions, encouraging me to stay in school and helping me to locate parenting classes to help me care for my son.”

The Junior League hopes the Youth Center will be a safe haven and a central point of service for former foster children like Latoya.

The Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale is a non-profit organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism and improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Proceeds from fundraisers benefit current Junior League projects, including the signature Junior League Play Station at the Holiday Park, Ronald McDonald House, and numerous Leagues on Loan projects throughout the year. Past Junior League projects include Museum of Art, Museum of Discovery and Science, Jack & Jill Children's Center, Kids in Distress, SOS Children's Village, Henderson Mental Health Clinic, OUR House, Susan B. Anthony Center, and Volunteer Broward. For more information, contact the Junior League office at 954.462.1350 or www.JLGFL.org.