



Friends of SoZo Kids Inc.

2021 Annual Report

Thanks to Friends Like You

Our mission is to connect the time, talent, and treasures of residents of The Villages and surrounding communities to meet the basic, educational, and emergency needs of children and their families living in poverty in the Ocala National Forest. We join with FRIENDS like you to celebrate the many ways our beloved SoZo Kids have benefited from our work together in 2021.

Meeting Basic Needs

Angel Tree Christmas Project

Christmas Wish Lists for 163 SoZo Kids, 50 teens, and many SoZo family moms were fulfilled through our Angel Tree Christmas Project. Two collection days provided donors and volunteers the opportunity to be part of the festivities to ensure gift bundles were complete and ready for Santa's sleigh. In addition, a \$10,000 gift was presented to the Help Agency to fulfill toy and other basic needs for children in the Forest during the holidays.

Holiday Meals

We provided the Help Agency with a grant to purchase 225 Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas hams to provide more than a thousand meals for SoZo Kids and their families.

Back-to-School Bash

Friends like you helped provide 1,000 backpacks filled with school supplies specific to the Kids' age and grade levels, 1,000 pairs of new sneakers, and several hundred packs of new underwear to start the school year. All these items were distributed at the annual Back-to-School Bash on August 6, where each child was personally fitted with shoes and received other needed items. Haircut and nail-polishing stations completed the day. Because of Friends like you, SoZo Kids had everything they needed to start the school year looking good and feeling great!

Valentine Bundles of Love

As a special Valentine's Day treat for SoZo Kids teens, you helped us provide more than 800 Valentine Bundles of Love filled with full-sized toiletries and holiday treats.

Foster Kid Care Kits

Sadly, there are times when SoZo Kids are removed from their homes to the safety of foster care. Foster Kid Care Kits are a duffle bag filled with a blanket, pillow, pillowcase, PJs, some clothing, and personal care items to help ease the transition. This year, we provided supplies for nearly 100 Foster Kid Care Kits.

Meeting Educational Needs

Generous donors provided us with the opportunity to invest in four new Educational Programs:

Post-Secondary Career/Education Award Program

Most SoZo Kids qualify for full tuition assistance because of their levels of poverty, so Friends of SoZo Kids launched the Post-Secondary Education Award Program, providing material goods such as computers and construction tools to help SoZo Kids pursue post-secondary careers. These awards help ensure the Kids have what they need to become successful, productive citizens earning living-wage jobs.

We had the pleasure of making three awards to SoZo Kids in Spring 2021. Two of the students are going on to college and were provided fully loaded computers. The third winner chose a career in construction. He was provided with new tools necessary to enter the trade, and he has already received a pay raise!

Camp SoZo Scholarship Program

With your help, we provided 200 SoZo Kids with the opportunity to participate in a three-night summer sleep-away camp experience at Camp SoZo. This program offers a healthful escape from the poverty in the Forest and offers fun activities and leadership training for the Kids.

Robotics Program

FOSKI launched a Robotics Program – first at the Summer Program at Forest Lakes Park and then as part of both After-School Programs. Thanks to donors like you, our volunteer leader, and many volunteer helpers, children ages 4-15 learned how to build and program age-appropriate robots. Robotics has helped SoZo Kids have fun while learning key educational skills that will equip them for the future. The children love this activity. Eventually we hope to hold robotics competitions among the Kids.

Nutritious Meals for Summer Day Program & After-School Programs

Children returned to in-person educational programs this past summer and at the start of the school year. Unfortunately, many Kids we serve don't enjoy dinner when they get home, compounding hunger insecurity and learning issues. A grant plus volunteer support from Friends like you allowed us to provide nutritious meals as part of the Summer and After-School Programs.

Meeting Emergency Needs

Grants Awarded to the Help Agency of the Forest

Because of your financial generosity, Friends of SoZo Kids was able to provide nearly \$90,000 in grants to the Help Agency of the Forest to meet Basic, Educational, and Emergency Needs. These grants significantly improved facilities for the Kids and volunteers. Improvement projects included drilling a new community-standards well to provide potable drinking water at the Forest Lakes Park Community Center. Other grants included financial assistance to purchase a used box truck to more efficiently provide food and goods to the people of the Forest.

Thank You for Being a Friend of SoZo Kids!

We invite you to review our 2020 IRS-Form 990 on the website at
www.FriendsofSoZoKids.com

Our 2021 IRS-Form 990 will be filed May 15, 2022