

## **FOSTER\*A\*LIFE'S HISTORY**

In June 2004, Foster\*A\*Life was established by Lubbock psychologist Dr. Shaun Keel, who has worked with foster children in the Lubbock area for many years. Most of these children have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect, resulting in their placement in foster care or other alternative placements determined by the State of Texas. These children have not only been traumatized by the abuse and neglect perpetrated upon them, but they have also been traumatized by their removal from the only caregivers they have usually ever known. As a result, they have missed out on so many things in their short lives. While in Dr. Keel's office receiving services, these children would frequently make comments to her about not having the things most other children take for granted, such as having birthday parties or being able to play Little League baseball or other activities.

Therefore, Foster\*A\*Life was created by Dr. Keel so that these "forgotten" children in the Lubbock area could have special dreams and opportunities to help them feel important and to help them build their self-esteem. With the help of dedicated volunteers, Foster\*A\*Life was established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and began fulfilling foster children's dreams and wishes. Along the way, Foster\*A\*Life expanded their vision to other children impacted by the child welfare system, including children adopted through CPS and young adults who have recently aged out of the foster care system.

## **FOSTER\*A\*LIFE'S MISSION**

The mission of FAL is to raise funds to provide a wide range of opportunities and services for these "forgotten" children that will enhance their lives and improve their self-esteem. As a result, Foster\*A\*Life has provided everything from festive get-togethers for siblings who no longer get to live with one another to musical instruments and lessons for children wanting to participate in their school band, from cheerleading outfits to tricycles and bicycles. Foster\*A\*Life even bought a new bed for a little boy after a bullet came through his bedroom window during a drive-by shooting and lodged in his old bed. Because he was reminded of that frightening event every time he saw the bullet hole in his headboard, he was able to safely return to his bedroom after the purchase of the new bed, complete with sheets and a comforter depicting Batman, his favorite superhero!

These dreams can be as creative as a child's imagination and frequently include such things as sports team registrations, summer camps, swimming pool passes, art classes, ballet lessons, tutoring, prom outfits, high school senior rings, and dress clothes for graduation and other special events. Foster\*A\*Life is always looking for new ways to partner with other caring individuals in Lubbock to help these children realize that, despite their

circumstances, there are people who care about them and want them to grow and develop to their fullest potential.

## **FOSTER\*A\*LIFE'S PURPOSE FOR THESE FUNDS**

Foster\*A\*Life wants these abused and neglected children to have the same opportunities other children experience. In Dr. Keel's psychology practice, she oftentimes had children draw pictures of themselves and the things that mattered most to them, and some of these pictures were amazing! In 2014, Dr. Keel and Foster\*A\*Life created the KIDS' ART JOURNEY, with the help of former Texas Tech football player (and artist!) Barron Batch to "kick off" this program. Beginning then and every year since, Foster\*A\*Life has collected artwork from foster children in the Lubbock area and then displayed their work at a special show hosted by the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts (LHUCA) during the First Friday Art Trail. Prizes, which can include private art lessons taught by a local artist, are also awarded to the children who have put forth extreme efforts to create exceptional pieces of art. It is so heartwarming to observe these children creating their masterpieces, explaining the stories behind their creations, and then getting to see the public admire their artistic talents.

Foster\*A\*Life's goal is to continue extending art related services to the children we serve, along with adding other types of artistic disciplines to the program, such as pottery making. And discussions have been ongoing with both the Lubbock Arts Alliance and LHUCA as to how Foster\*A\*Life can best attain this goal.

Therefore, Foster\*A\*Life would be honored to further this endeavor with the assistance of unclaimed monies received by the State Comptroller and allocated for the:

- ENCOURAGEMENT
- PROMOTION
- IMPROVEMENT
- and
- APPLICATION

of the ARTS IN Lubbock County. And we greatly appreciate any consideration given to the KIDS' ART JOURNEY by the Lubbock County Commissioners Court. Thank you.