



PRESS RELEASE

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Pasco Tax Collector's Offices Collected Suitcases for the "Luggage of Love" Program

Pasco County Tax Collector Mike Fasano, when he first learned about the “Luggage of Love” program, committed to helping meet its goal of equipping displaced children and families with new and/ or “gently-used” suitcases. “Luggage of Love” is coordinated in Pasco County by the **University of Florida’s Pasco Extension Office**. The children, who often must travel with caseworkers into foster care, or are otherwise removed from their homes due to emergency situations, historically have only had plastic garbage bags in which to carry their clothing and personal belongings. The luggage adds a level of dignity to a child who is most likely experiencing one of the most traumatic events in

their young life (i.e. being removed from their home). In other cases single mothers, often escaping domestic violence, are the recipients of the luggage for themselves and their children.

The staff of the **Pasco County Tax Collector's Office** responded to the call for help and luggage soon began arriving, ready to be delivered to kids in need. So far, two deliveries have been made: one right before Thanksgiving, 2019 and the second right before Christmas, 2019. Additionally, a cash donation of \$500 was made to the program to use as needed.

"Thank you so very much for the donations we have received," comments **Elizabeth Urquiola, Program Coordinator for the UF Pasco Extension Office & the "Luggage of Love" program.** "We can't thank you enough for your amazing generosity. We are working with a Sunrise survivor mom of six children who I look forward to equipping with honorable means to transport their belongings once they transition from the shelter. We also have luggage tags and a stamp with a logo that we donate with the luggage (they currently use masking tape to jot the child's name on the trash or grocery bags they currently use). Your cash donation will help us equip this amazing program with more tags and a better logo stamp."

"It is heartbreaking to think that a child or a mother in distress may only have plastic garbage bags which they use to carry their belongings," remarks **Tax Collector Mike Fasano.** "I am so proud of our staff who rose to the occasion and donated everything from suitcases to duffle bags and backpacks for this incredible charity. We've made two deliveries of luggage already and continue to accept donations for future deliveries."

If you would like to donate luggage or need more information about the program please contact **Assistant Tax Collector Greg Giordano** at 727-847-8179 or **"Luggage of Love" Program Coordinator Elizabeth Urquiola** at 352-521-1254, x5325.

[PHOTO ATTACHED – **Elizabeth Urquiola** and the luggage donated by the **Pasco County Tax Collector's Office** staff members]

