

Four charities benefit from 'Steppin Up' shoe drive



Valerie Viglione

In one month's time, with the help of mentor Pam Masters, Valerie Viglione, Alex Rijos, Christine Mirrione and Pam Lucas were able to increase their contribution from last year's 378 pairs of shoes to this year's contribution of 850 brand new pair of shoes for kids in our community as part of the "Steppin Up" program. Organizations that benefited from the "Steppin Up" program were the Children's Home Society, the Jack and Jill Children's Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and ChildNet.

In her sixth year facilitating the program at ECHO Salon, Viglione credits her clients, coworkers and Leadership Broward friends with

pushing the program forward with such gusto this year. "Once I realized that people wanted to help, I couldn't stop talking about the shoes," said Valerie. "I lost my voice twice, and it was so worth it."

While some donated and wrapped shoes, others donated money and relationships formed all over town between shoe stores and friends willing to help. Others donated socks and wrapping paper, and still more helped with an aptly named fundraiser, "The Optimist Lounge," proceeds of which bought more shoes and also benefited Dachshund Rescue South Florida.

"I have so many generous people to thank," said Viglione. "These shoes are tangible proof that whatever we want to accomplish together, the possibilities are limitless. Special thanks are extended to the clients of ECHO Salon Fort Lauderdale and Absolute Salon Coconut Creek. We've harnessed the power of love and caring, and changed the world for these kids. Knowing that, there's nothing we cannot do."

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