

Four cheers: Impressive youths

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There were some wet eyes recently regarding the stories of foster children.

Jim Adams, chief executive officer for Family Support Services of North Florida, was elated after returning from the 22nd annual National One Church One Child Conference in Baltimore. Adams and others had chaperoned six foster children from Jacksonville on the trip.

"The children," Adams wrote in an e-mail, "acquainted the audience with their heartwarming life stories.

"The audience was left in tears, and people were approaching the group afterward with immense praise.

"The child welfare secretary from Maryland is going to ask that they again present during an upcoming conference.

"All of us are so proud of what these children have accomplished and will continue to accomplish in their lives."

We know enough former foster children to agree that many, indeed, do have compelling stories.

Many go through a lot of struggles, but often they overcome great odds, particularly if they end up with loving foster and adoptive parents.

They can be quite an inspiration. It's too bad more people don't hear their stories.

At any rate, it's good to hear there are even more success stories from this area's foster program.

Helping our friends

The recent Paws Park Fundraiser netted about \$11,000, according to Shorelines, a Times-Union community news publication.

The money will be used for maintenance and improvements at the dog park in Jacksonville Beach.

There is a reason dogs are called "man's best friend."

The reason, quite simply, is that they, indeed, often show the characteristics of a good friend — always happy to see, and faithful to, their masters.

But, unlike yesteryear, they no longer can run free — except in some rural areas. At dog parks, they can get exercise — something they need and enjoy immensely.

Dogs give a lot to us.

It's good that we are giving back.

\$1 million in donations

Allied Veterans of the World Inc. and Affiliates, a nonprofit that operates Internet-based gaming centers, recently awarded more than \$1 million in donations.

Among the largest donations, The Times-Union reported, were \$100,000 to Jacksonville's USO chapter, \$50,000 to the Wounded Warrior Project; \$50,000 to the Florida National Guard Foundation; \$25,000 to the Justice Coalition; \$35,000 to Community Hospice of Northeast Florida; and \$10,000 to help homeless veterans in St. Johns County.

The city is fortunate to have such an effective — and generous — charity.

The economic times make it difficult to donate, yet the need is great.

A day for the kids

About 5,000 people attended the recent JaxKids Day event downtown, according to a city of Jacksonville news release.

More than 200 volunteers worked at the event, which included health fair booths, a hay ride, and "bounce houses" — not to mention a family walk/stroll/run twice around Hemming Plaza and activities inside the impressive halls of the Main Public Library.

The event started simply as the kickoff for Mayor John Peyton's Book Club, but it has morphed into an event unto its own in the past two years, a city spokeswoman said.

Children are our most precious resource. The more we can do for them, the better.

The attendance alone — several thousand people packed into a small area — is evidence that the event offers a great deal.

Kudos to City Hall for presenting this excellent event.