MacDonell Kids Count

Junior Auxiliary of Houma

MacDonnell Kids Count has been the Child Welfare Project for Junior Auxiliary of Houma for over ten years. When this project began, the ladies focused on building relationships with the residents of MacDonell Children’s Services. MCS is a residential home for children who are deemed in need of care by Louisiana DCFS. The residence houses boys from age 11 through 17 whose situations leave them in need of a safe home with a loving environment. There are no more than 12 boys in the home at one time and for the majority of them, it is their permanent residence. Over the years JAH has provided birthday parties and holiday celebrations to brighten their days and help with their day-to-day tribulations.

In April 2018, the boys that we have grown to love and support, were involved in a tragic accident while enjoying an afternoon of fishing. A drunk driver ran off the road, striking five of the boys. Three of them sustained severe injuries and were airlifted to a hospital in New Orleans. Our hearts were shattered when we learned what happened to these boys and we knew that they would need us now more than ever. Prior to the accident, a bowling outing was planned, but we weren’t sure if they would want to continue with that event. After speaking with their caretakers, we all agreed that it would be good for those who were not involved in the accident, along with those who had been released from the hospital, to participate in the outing. We could tell their hearts were heavy upon arrival, but a few rounds of bowling, some arcade games, and lots of pizza helped take their mind off the previous week’s tragedy.

Our members didn’t stop there. The following month, the committee chairs planned a night out to remember for those boys. A party bus was rented, which if you’re not from South Louisiana, it
may sound a little strange – but those boys loved it. The driver drove them and JAH members around
town listening to music, dancing, and laughing. It was a surprise for them and they loved every
minute of it.

Later in May, administration from the MacDonell Home contacted our membership regarding
a surprise reception that was being held in honor of the bravery that the boys who were uninjured
exhibited to the injured. Our local first responders, many who were on scene the day of the tragedy,
came out and presented the boys and staff with medals for their bravery that day. A few of our
members were lucky enough to attend the reception and there was not a dry eye in the room. Because
of the confidentially surrounding the boys, this wasn’t in the newspaper or social media, but will
forever be in the hearts and minds of our membership.

Over the summer the project chair and committee members put together one of the best
events yet. They were all finally released from the hospital by this time, so we knew it was time for
something special. A cook-out was planned, but it wasn’t your average cook-out. One of our local
Fire Chiefs offered to cook for the everyone, but he did not stop there. We had set-up a slip and slide
kickball field, complete with kiddie pools and visqueen. To water down the field, our Chief hooked
his fire truck up to a hydrant and doused the field from above. The boys and members thought it was
the coolest thing ever! A great time was had by all and it is still talked about today.

At any given time, we are happy to provide the boys with anything we can, but it became
even more important in the weeks following the accident, but what they value the most is the time we
spend with them. The residents of the MacDonell Home are not living what most would consider a
“typical” teenage boy life, but we strive to bring some of that into their lives.