

GOOD MORNING EVERYONE...

LET ME START BY THANKING ALL OF YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY AT ZOO MIAMI FOR THE LAUNCH OF THIS VERY IMPORTANT EFFORT TO HELP THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

JUST LAST MONTH AS PART OF THIS CAMPAIGN, I WAS VISITED IN MY OFFICE BY SEVEN FOSTER CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES...

THE CHILDREN WERE ALL DRESSED UP AS VARIOUS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY EMPLOYEES REPRESENTING DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS...

WE HAD A POLICEMAN, AND A FIREFIGHTER, AND SEVERAL OTHERS...

THEY WERE DRESSED LIKE THIS BECAUSE THE THEME OF OUR CAMPAIGN IS A CALL TO "BE A HERO..."

AND THE CHILDREN VIEW OUR PUBLIC SERVANTS AS COMMUNITY HEROES.

AND WHILE EACH OF THESE CHILDREN REPRESENTED A FUTURE HERO...

WHEN I SAW THEIR FOSTER PARENTS...

I KNEW THAT THE HEROES WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE ARE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO OPEN THEIR HEARTS AND THEIR HOMES AS ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER PARENTS TO THESE CHILDREN.

OUR COMMUNITY, AND OUR CHILDREN NEED MORE OF THESE HEROES.

AND THAT'S WHY WE ARE ALL HERE.

THE NEED FOR MORE ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER PARENTS IS REAL, AND THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY:

ON AVERAGE, FOR MIAMI-DADE AND MONROE COUNTIES:

THERE ARE 3,500 CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE.

1,600 OF THESE CHILDREN ARE BELOW THE AGE OF FIVE.

200 CHILDREN ENTER FOSTER CARE EVERY MONTH...

AND OVER 540 CHILDREN ARE WAITING TO BE ADOPTED.

AS PART OF THE "OUR COMMUNITY TAKING CARE OF OUR KIDS CAMPAIGN..."

WE ARE ASKING THE OVER 24,000 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY EMPLOYEES, AND THE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY AT LARGE TO BE A HERO TO THESE CHILDREN.

WE HAVE JOINED FORCES TO SUPPORT "OUR KIDS" IN THEIR MISSION TO CREATE SAFE HAVENS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION...

AND TO ENSURE THAT EVERY AT-RISK CHILD IN MIAMI-DADE AND MONROE WILL GROW UP WITH A SAFE, LOVING, NURTURING, AND PERMANENT FAMILY.

WHILE WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN THE PAST DECADE TOWARD VASTLY IMPROVING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FOR OUR COMMUNITY...

WE ARE CURRENTLY FACING A NEW CHALLENGE THAT WE NEED TO OVERCOME.

"OUR KIDS" IS SEEING AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE ENTERING THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM...

AND THIS IS WHY WE NEED APPROXIMATELY 200 LOVING AND CARING FOSTER HOMES TO HELP US TAKE CARE OF THEM.

THROUGH THE "OUR COMMUNITY TAKING CARE OF OUR KIDS" CAMPAIGN...

THIS IS A CALL TO ARMS, AND I CHALLENGE EVERYONE TO WORK WITH US FOR THE FUTURE OF THESE CHILDREN.

THE BEST THING ABOUT THIS IS THAT NO AMOUNT OF HELP IS TOO SMALL.

EVERYONE CAN HELP...

WE NEED ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

WE NEED FOSTER PARENTS.

WE NEED DONATIONS.

BOTTOM LINE:

WE NEED YOU!

JOIN "OUR COMMUNITY" IN "TAKING CARE OF OUR KIDS..."

OPEN YOUR HEARTS, OPEN YOUR WALLETS, OPEN YOUR HOMES!

FOR THE LIFE OF A CHILD IN NEED, NO ACT IS TOO BIG, OR TOO SMALL...

THANK YOU!

