

# Disney's Support of Covenant House Helps Youth Build Solid Foundation

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Dec. 23, 2011 – During the holidays and throughout the year, Walt Disney World Resort provides cash and in-kind support to hundreds of local organizations that aim to build brighter futures for children and families.

One such organization benefitting from Disney's ongoing outreach is Covenant House Florida, which focuses on helping runaway, homeless and at-risk youth – including teen parents and their babies.

Earlier this year, Disney donated enough surplus carpeting to refurbish the organization's entire center, replacing worn-down flooring with hundreds of feet of new carpet and padding.

Maria Shorkey, Covenant House community relations director, said the donation helps provide a safer and more comfortable surface for toddlers and young children to crawl and play.

"The kids are always playing or doing activities on the floor and new, clean carpet makes a world of difference for them," said Shorkey.

Disney supports Covenant House in other ways too. Recently, hundreds of Central Floridians gathered at Lake Eola for Covenant House's annual candlelight vigil to show support and raise awareness of homeless youth in the community. As part of its ongoing community outreach efforts, Walt Disney World served as a sponsor of the event.

Angie Sola, Walt Disney World Resort community relations program manager, works closely with Covenant House and attended the ceremony.

"The vigil is a very humbling experience and a reminder not to take anything for granted," Sola said. "We hope that bringing exposure to the issue of homelessness will move the community to find and fund solutions so no child feels they are alone in the world."

Walt Disney World gave the organization a \$28,000 Disney *Helping Kids Shine* grant earlier this year to help fund its Bright Beginnings program, in which children facing extreme poverty participate in creative activities that help build character, stimulate their development and strengthen the relationship between parent and child.

Grants like these help Covenant House Florida provide food and shelter, as well as life skills and education programs to those in need. Last year, the center in Orlando offered resources to more than 200 youths.

To learn more about Covenant House, visit [covenanthousefl.org](http://covenanthousefl.org).