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Youth Presented Award for Commitment to Foster Children in NJ

EATONTOWN, NJ – You’re never too young to spread the seeds of kindness in the community, as 13-year-old Marissa Leber of East Brunswick, NJ proves. On her way to making her Bat Mitzvah, Marissa decided she would undertake a project to help children in foster care in Middlesex County. Because of her hard work and dedication, she was awarded the Outstanding Commitment Award at Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) and the state Department of Child Protection and Permanency’s (DCP&P) annual recognition awards.

Marissa accepted the award at the Pacific Concord Hotel in front of a crowd of more than 100 foster, adoptive and kinship parents and children, as well as dozens of FAFS and DCP&P staff members.

While most teenagers might fuss over dresses and invitations, Marissa was focused on helping the children in her community who needed it most. She decided she wanted to make “bedtime bags” for children who were entering foster care.

Marissa took it upon herself to contact friends and family and begin collecting items for these care packages. By the end of October, she had stuffed 85 large bags and made the decision to give them to vulnerable children in Middlesex County.

FAFS Chief Executive Officer Mary Jane Awrachow commented, “Marissa exemplifies what is so remarkable about thousands of foster, adoptive and kinship families across the state – their willingness to provide safe, stable, nurturing homes for children in need. We applaud the Marissa’s dedication to New Jersey’s children in care.”

To earn the award, Marissa met criteria set by the FAFS Board of Directors, which included heightening awareness of foster care, extraordinary commitment to children in care, positive impact on the foster, adoptive and kinship community and improving community outreach for the benefit of children in adoptive care.

For more than 20 years, FAFS, in cooperation with DCP&P, has recognized individuals and families for outstanding achievement in supporting children in foster care.

The mission of FAFS is to provide support, training and advocacy to meet the special needs of foster, adoptive and kinship families who provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for children in foster care in New Jersey. FAFS is a federal 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, with headquarters on Route 1 in Monmouth Junction. Simply stated, FAFS is the voice of foster, adoptive and kinship families in New Jersey.

