

The dining room was haunted. The living room was ghostly. Creepy yellow and black streamers were stretched across the ceiling. Spiders hung from the fans. Perfect. The Homeless Family Center Halloween party could begin. Thirty-six children and their parents squeezed into the small space and enjoyed themselves thanks to the generosity of the Fishin' Chicks, a handful of volunteers and the tireless energy of the staff.

The Fishin' Chicks provided costumes for all the children. In fact it was really the work of the event coordinator, Donna Maness and a teenage former resident of HFC that found, sized and fitted the costumes. They brought arts and crafts, games to play, popcorn that was stuffed into plastic gloves to create "haunted hands" and orange icing cupcakes and pretzels dipped in orange and black candy for a treat. This was all served with a "witch's brew" complete with floating hands made with frozen grape juice. At the end of the day the children were presented a goody bag to take with them. Most of all the Fishin' Chicks came all ten of them to interact with the children, carry out the face painting, help with the gluing of the plate pictures, making sure that every child was included and engaged.

One Fishin' Chicks volunteer came with coloring contest entry forms from Publix. She got all the children to draw in the form and was going to anonymously enter all the drawings into the contest. She would submit them with her name and the first name of the HFC child. In that way the children could participate without identifying where they lived. A rather clever approach to getting the children involved.

In the evening some of the families headed to the mall to continue with the festivities to collect more goodies. The children were very happy to hear that for this one week only they would be able to hold on to their accumulated candy.

If you or your group want to help the families of HFC please contact Marie Lument, Volunteer Coordinator at 772-567-5537. We need enthusiastic volunteers who want to help turn some lives around and bring some normality into the lives of families that are struggling.

The Homeless Family Center provides opportunities for homeless families to end homelessness by achieving self-sufficiency through education, living wages and permanent housing. For more information or a tour of the Homeless Family Center call Julia Keenan at 772-567-5537. Check out the HFC website at www.homelessfamilycenter.org so you can see the faces of the people you will be helping