



### Statement Of Voices For Children Foundation

Voices For Children Foundation ("Voices") issues the following statement to correct some misimpressions created by Nest of Love's recent appearance on The Ellen Show. This is the only statement authorized to be made on behalf of Voices in connection with this matter. Any other statement made by anyone else – in writing or in connection with any interview or other public statement – in connection with this matter, regardless of their affiliation with Voices, is: (1) made solely on his or her own behalf; (2) is not in any way authorized, approved or adopted by Voices; and (3) should not in any way be attributed to, or deemed to be made on behalf of, Voices.

For the past nine (9) years Voices for Children and the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program of Miami-Dade County have cultivated and grown a special partnership with a local Old Navy store. The collaboration jointly raises funds to provide children in foster care with school clothing and supplies. In August of each year, shortly before the official start of school in Miami-Dade County, Voices and Old Navy put on a wonderful event at which underprivileged foster kids are given Old Navy gift cards to buy back-to-school clothes of their choosing. In the past, Old Navy has even closed their store to the public from 6:00-9:00 p.m. to allow as many as 400 foster youth and their families to shop in private for back-to-school essentials.

Each year Voices has drawn upon its network of supporters and donor base to provide additional resources for the foster youth who attend these Old Navy events. What started as a shopping spree for Old Navy clothes has dramatically expanded to providing these children in foster care with an entire array of school supplies from other retailers, such as backpacks, calculators, pens, pencils, pads, staplers and the like. Other long-time Voices supporters have generously joined us in making this event a great success -- whether it is having Office Depot providing backpacks and other school supplies; other local retailers providing coupons to purchase additional supplies; having the Miami Heat mascot on site; or local restaurants providing snacks – all for the purpose of providing as many children in foster care as possible with a sense of preparedness and dignity for the new school year.

For this year's event, Voices – and Voices alone – was able to secure the participation of Adidas as a sponsor. For children in foster care, "brand name" shoes such as Adidas are a luxury that these children can rarely afford. As a result of a collaboration between a member of Voices' Board of Directors and a local Adidas representative (who himself was formerly a foster child), Voices was able to convince Adidas to donate over 450 pairs of high quality athletic shoes to the children at this year's Old Navy event.

Also in connection with this year's event, Voices – and Voices alone – was able to secure a \$15,000 donation from Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. This generous donation was facilitated in large part because an executive of Royal Caribbean sits on Voices' Board of Directors. Those funds were used to purchase various kinds of school supplies for the children (pens, pencils, notebooks, notepads, staplers, calculators, etc.), including – and of particular significance here –

over 400 school backpacks. The remaining funds were used to underwrite the cost of the \$100 Old Navy gift cards that were distributed to the participating children to enable them to purchase back-to-school clothing.

Shortly before this year's event, Voices was contacted by Nest of Love. Voices had not previously heard of Nest of Love or worked with them before -- in connection with the annual Old Navy event or otherwise. Nest of Love contacted Voices to inquire if they could participate in an unspecified collection for children in foster care. Voices gladly accepted Nest of Love's gracious offer of participation, and explained to them Voices' upcoming annual Old Navy event.

Nest of Love showed up at the Old Navy event with approximately 50 backpacks. They distributed some of those backpacks, took pictures with our children, and then left shortly thereafter, taking with them the remainder of the backpacks they did not distribute. Nest of Love's contribution to the event was limited to the backpacks they distributed.

To be clear, Voices does not in any way mean to minimize or denigrate Nest of Love's actual contribution to our Old Navy event. Nest of Love's generous efforts in providing approximately 50 backpacks is valued and appreciated, both by Voices and, we are sure, the children who received them. But it is important to understand that Nest of Love's providing of those approximately 50 backpacks -- which is approximately 11% of the total number of backpacks purchased and donated in connection with the event -- is the extent of Nest of Love's contributions to the Old Navy event.

To be more specific, Nest of Love had no involvement with procuring Adidas as a sponsor for the event, or for Adidas' generous donation of athletic shoes. Adidas' sponsorship and donation was, again, procured solely as a result of Voices' efforts, through one of Voices' Board members.

Similarly, Nest of Love did not contribute any funds to underwrite the cost of the Old Navy gift cards, nor did Nest of Love raise or contribute any of the funds that were used to provide those gift cards. Those funds came exclusively from donations from Old Navy and Royal Caribbean (and to a much lesser extent, some smaller individual donors having no affiliation with Nest of Love).

Finally, Nest of Love had no involvement with raising or donating the funds that were used to purchase the other school supplies that were provided to these children -- those funds were, again, donated by Royal Caribbean Cruises.

So, you can imagine Voices surprise at how Nest of Love's participation in that event was portrayed on the September 9, 2019 episode of The Ellen Show. Starting with a question by Ellen DeGeneres: "Explain what you do as a group" and "Explain the Old Navy thing," representatives of Nest of Love described their involvement in the Old Navy event as follows:

ELLEN: "Explain -- Daniella and Brianna, right? -- Ok, explain what you do as a group. What kinds of things."

NEST OF LOVE REPRESENTATIVE: "Oh man."

ELLEN: "Explain the Old Navy thing. The Old Navy thing was great."

NEST OF LOVE REPRESENTATIVE: "Yeah, so the Old Navy thing was amazing actually. *We* closed down Old Navy. They gave 400 foster kids one hundred dollar gift cards for them to go shopping, get all the clothes that they needed for school. *We*, uh, Adidas sponsored *us* as well, they sponsored the event, and they gave out free pairs of shoes to all the kids, and then *we also got them school supplies* – whoo, hold on, let me catch my breath here – *school supplies and backpacks* – and it was just beautiful to see that they were actually going to be able to go back to school and not feel like they didn't have everything that they needed.

ELLEN: "That's incredible. *It's one thing to have the idea*, and then to see it happen."

NEST OF LOVE REPRESENTATIVE: (nods head in agreement) "I feel like I just ran a marathon."

During that exchange, all of the other representatives of Nest Of Love sitting on the set with Ellen were nodding their heads in approval of everything that was said. No one expressed any disagreement or made any attempt to correct or clarify any of those statements.

There can be no disagreement that Nest of Love's participation in the event was exaggerated. Plainly, the impression was given that the Old Navy event was their event and their idea ("We closed down Old Navy;" "Adidas sponsored us;" "It's one thing to have the idea, and then to see it happen."), when in fact Voices came up with idea for the event 9 years ago and, for the past 9 years, Voices has planned, organized and implemented the event through the tireless efforts of the Voices and GAL staff and volunteers without the participation of Nest of Love.

The statements by the Nest of Love representatives on The Ellen Show also gave the misimpression that Nest of Love was responsible for securing Adidas' involvement and generous donation of athletic shoes ("Adidas sponsored *us* as well...and they gave out free pairs of shoes to all the kids."). Again, Adidas' participation in the event and donation of shoes was exclusively due to the efforts of a Voices director, without any involvement of Nest of Love.

The impression that Nest of Love was responsible for the donation of funds that were used to purchase school supplies for the participating children ("*we also got them school supplies... school supplies and backpacks*") is also inaccurate, as the funds used to purchase those school supplies were donated by Royal Caribbean, and not by Nest of Love. And even Nest of Love's donation of backpacks was unfortunately exaggerated as, again, Nest of Love was responsible for providing only 11% of the total number of backpacks that were donated in connection with the event. The vast majority of the backpacks (89%) were purchased and donated by Royal Caribbean.

Not to be misunderstood, we have no way reason to believe that Nest of Love would intentionally misrepresent its involvement in the Voices' Old Navy event, or that they had any

ulterior motive in appearing on the show. The members of that organization appear to be well-meaning and decent people. Perhaps it was a result of the pressure of being put unexpectedly on the set of a nationally televised show, without sufficient time to think or reflect upon on the accurateness of what they were saying. Or perhaps there is another legitimate explanation. In any event, we assume that Nest Of Love provided to the producers of The Ellen Show some type of written description of their involvement in the Old Navy event prior to appearing on the show – one written not in the heat of the moment but which allowed for reflection before it was submitted. We would hope and expect that any such written submission would contain a more accurate description of Nest of Love’s participation in the Old Navy event.

Please understand that Voices regrets having to issue this statement. Voices values all of its donors and contributors, no matter how much they contribute, and Nest of Love is no exception. Most of our donors contribute their time and money not to generate publicity for themselves, but rather because they feel strongly about the very important cause of Voices and the vulnerable children who depend on Voices to support them. But when an individual, one-time participant who plays a relatively minor role in an event takes unjustified credit for the efforts of others, it not only denigrates the efforts of those who played a far more significant role, and who are far more responsible for the ultimate success of the event, but it also creates a substantial disincentive for others who want to meaningfully get involved in and contribute to Voices’ important mission.

September 26, 2019