



# East Side Forum

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## Survivor throws party for child with same cancer

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Shanee Moret-Barreto turned 21 earlier this year and threw a party, a birthday bash at the La Quinta Inn in Coral Springs. But the Florida Atlantic University student wasn't thinking only of herself. She saw

to it that the real guest of honor was 3-year-old Bianca Jaimes.

Bianca is up against an unusual form of cancer known as bilateral Wilms tumor. A cancer of the kidneys, it is the same malignancy that

nearly killed Moret-Barreto a couple of decades ago.

"When I was born, my kidneys were over large," Moret-Barreto said. "They looked like

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two Budhas side by side. There were all these little tumors in both kidneys." The doctors told her mother she had a few weeks to live.

"But we got through," she said. Since then, she gives each month to the American Children's Society and St. Jude Children's Research Hospi-

tal. But as her 21st birthday approached, she went searching for something more.

"I looked for a child that had a similar disease to mine," Moret-Barreto said. "I wanted to donate money. I was researching online and found a site with pictures of the children. I saw a picture of Bianca and decided to give the money to her."

The site belongs to the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit set up in 2004 by former middle school math teacher Sandra Muvdi. The foundation, with an office at Broward Health Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale, is named after Muvdi's daughter, who died at age 7 of leukemia.

"We're a nonprofit helping families in crisis [in which] a child has been diagnosed with cancer," Muvdi said. "Since most of our fami-

lies fall below the poverty line, they get most of their medical treatment through Medicaid."

But there are other things, Muvdi said. "When a family has a really sick child, one parent becomes a full-time caregiver and can't have a job. But who's going to pay the rent, the phone bill, FPL, make the car payment? It becomes a horrible situation that has to be addressed."

The foundation will step in to pay what bills it can for these families, Muvdi said. "That's our mission. Last year our budget was around \$250,000. But we continue to grow."

After Moret-Barreto saw Bianca's photo and contacted the foundation, Muvdi's group became party planners. The organization made all the arrangements for the party and ensured that Bianca's family had

all the information.

"I believe in Bianca's survival," Moret-Barreto said. "She has great doctors at Miami Children's Hospital, a family that cares for her and people like myself who donate and help her. She'll get through."

"Bianca's doing better now," said her mother, Blanca Santibanez. "She's off treatment, though she goes in for evaluation every month."

And the odds are shifting in her favor. Medscape, a Web resource for health professionals, observes that 80 to 90 percent of children with this diagnosis survive thanks to current therapy.

The party was a triumph, Moret-Barreto said. "Bianca and her little sister danced most of the night. And there were cupcakes. Little girls love cupcakes."