

## Party helps 3-year-old with cancer



Shanee Moret-Barreto enjoys a moment with Bianca James, 3, during her 21st birthday party. (Submitted photo)

By Julie Levin, Special Correspondent

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Celebrating a 21st birthday is a big milestone for many, but especially for Shanee Moret-Barreto.

Two decades ago, doctors told her parents she would not make it even 21 days, much less her 21st birthday, because of a rare form of [cancer](#) she was fighting. "Because of that, I wanted to celebrate my 21st birthday in a special way," said Moret-Barreto, of Palm Beach Gardens.

So Moret-Barreto and family planned a birthday party in [Coral Springs](#). Instead of asking for gifts, she requested that guests bring at least a \$21 donation for 3-year-old Bianca James. The girl is fighting the same type of cancer she had, bilateral [Wilms tumor](#), a cancer of the kidneys.

Moret-Barreto wanted to invite Bianca and her family as a show of support and hope.

She found Bianca through the [Fort Lauderdale](#)-based Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation, which provides financial assistance for the families of children with cancer.

"I saw the photo of Bianca, and when I read her story on the JJCCF website, I immediately contacted the foundation because after everything my family and I have been through, I knew I needed to help this little girl," she said.

With the link set up by the foundation, the two finally met at the La Quinta Inn Banquet Hall in Coral Springs. There were plenty of hugs, and Bianca danced the night away in her bright pink princess dress.

"I kissed her on the cheek and told her she looked beautiful," Moret-Barreto said.

The party raised more than \$1,000, all of which will go to help Bianca's family with basic necessities, such as rent and food.

"Once again, God has sent an angel to keep me strong and faithful and help me to believe in my daughter's recovery," said Blanca Santibanez, Bianca's mother.

Sandra Muvdi established the foundation after her 7-year-old daughter, Jessica June Eiler Muvdi, died of [leukemia](#) in 2003.

"As an advocate, we make others aware of what these families experience when they are in a crisis situation," Muvdi said.

Moret-Barreto eventually beat the disease and is today in the honors program at Florida Atlantic University. She is a triathlete and plans to become a neuropsychologist.

She hopes to host another benefit for Bianca and other families around Thanksgiving with one simple message: "Never turn your back on faith, and never turn your back on believing in people and their love."

For more information, visit [Jccf.org](http://Jccf.org) or call 954-712-6322.

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