

Mom who lost daughter to cancer helps kids' battle

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Imagine yourself an unemployed single mother who has a child with leukemia, two other youngsters at home, the rent is due and you have no place to get the money to stave off eviction.

For Melissa Robinson, 26, of Fort Lauderdale, the scenario was all too real, and a story that Sandra Muvdi hears all too frequently.

Muvdi lost her 7-year-old daughter, Jessica June, three years ago to leukemia. She founded the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation in her memory.

Muvdi stepped in and gave Robinson a \$500 check to pay the rent until other financial assistance could be arranged. Robinson was a waitress, but had to quit her job to take care of her sick son, Jordan. The family of four now receives Medicaid, Social Security and food stamps, but still can't make ends meet.

Initially, Robinson thought she had the resources to pay rent and some bills for a few months.

"I had hoped to sell my car and pay the rent, but before I could, the car

was towed," she said. "[The help] was a load off of my mind, and gave a little peace for me and three very grateful kids. Sandra even gave the kids Christmas presents and took them on a trip to Wannado City. There's a 50-50 chance that I won't be in the predicament again."

Since Jordan became ill last April, he's been a weekly visitor to Broward General Medical Center for treatments or tests. Unlike other children undergoing treatment there, Robinson said Jordan is excited to interact with the staff and physicians. Muvdi said she is glad to help sick children. The former middle school math teacher quit her job soon after her daughter's death and returned to her native Colombia. While she was there, she visited a hospital providing free treatment for children and soon decided to help youngsters here battle cancer.

"Children with cancer can survive about 70 percent of the time. The main ingredient for survival is having access to money so that they receive the proper care and treatment," Muvdi said.

She has been working with Broward General Medical Center, the hos-



RESCUER: Sandra Muvdi, from left, helped out Melissa Robinson, whose son, Jordan, has leukemia. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Cavacceppi

pital where her daughter was treated, to provide assistance to families in need.

Muvdi raises funds at several schools in Fort Lauderdale, including the Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School and St. Anthony Religious Education School. She uses her teaching background to develop lesson plans on cancer awareness and how it affects children. She raises money for her foundation by selling buttons and T-shirts and asking for donations.

"I ask everyone in the classroom to raise their hand if they know someone who is affected by cancer, and almost everyone in the room raises their hand," she said. "I teach kids that they should not treat people differently if they should look different from the effects of radiation or chemotherapy.

"Working with children fills the big void in my life after my loss of my daughter. Her loss has filled me with darkness and pain. I get a lot of satisfaction helping underprivileged kids with cancer."

For more information, visit the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation Web site at www.jccf.org or call Muvdi at 954-589-5603.

Do you have a recent story of hope? Have you overcome adversity in raising a family, been involved in a rescue or beaten the odds medically? Contact Freida Frisaro at ffrisaro@sun-sentinel.com or call 954-385-7926.