

'MY BAG

MY STORY'

AS A FORMER FOSTER PARENT, BRENTWOOD RESIDENT CARA FINGER REALIZED MANY HEART-BREAKING MOMENTS WERE HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN WHO UNEXPECTEDLY FACE FOSTER CARE. So, she decided to take steps to provide a gesture of comfort to those children, and found a new way to promote their self-worth and dignity.

Last August, Cara launched a nonprofit called My Bag My Story to provide duffel bags and backpacks for children who are in foster care, giving them a personal, new way to store their belongings.

"When we became foster parents, I saw children carrying all they possessed in plastic sacks. It steals a child's self-respect when you give them a trash bag for the only things they have in life. Sometimes the only thing kids have control over is their stuff," recalls Cara.

"Children in foster care often have many issues working against them, due to no fault of their own. Something so small as having their own decent bag can go a long way," she says.

Cara knows deeply how meaningful small acts of kindness can be. As an infant, she was adopted and has lived a happy, secure life. Among her three children, two are adopted.

"In our own backyard in Brentwood, people aren't aware of the plights of children who are in the foster care program. So much can be obtained by kindness provided at the right moments in a child's life," Cara says.

She's also hoping to partner with local dance or art companies who may be able to provide scholarships or discounted rates for children in foster care.

My Bag My Story offers its bags online and through pop-up events, with each less than \$50. Cara indicates when a person buys one, another is given to children entering foster care or moving from one foster care family to another. She says people can buy bags to donate directly as well.

College students, moms and preschoolers are her current main customers, she says.

Cara is grateful for the instrumental support she's gotten from Belmont University students in the Enactus social entrepreneurial organization within the Massey School of Business. They helped her with filing paperwork to become a nonprofit, establishing logistics for retail sales and developing public awareness.

**NONPROFIT RESTORES CONFIDENCE
TO FOSTER CHILDREN ONE
CARRYALL AT A TIME**

ARTICLE JULIE BROWN PATTON

