

December 2023 Newsletter

The Questions:

Is it really December already?
Where did this year go?
What did I even accomplish in 2023?

The Answer:

This year as members, supporters and donors of FOCUS you brought hope and help to thousands of San Diego's most vulnerable children!





A message from the President Denise Donato-McConnell

Congratulations!

***When you look back on 2023 you have so very much for which you can be proud!
Because of you, FOCUS was able to help thousands of local children in need or in crisis!***

What an amazing year 2023 has been because of the generosity of your time, efforts and donations! By the end of the year, we will have helped over 50 different partner charities in their mission to aid vulnerable children and youth!

Hopefully, you have been reading our fabulous VP of Projects monthly recap of the amazing project requests we have been able to fulfill, and the children whose lives will have been made better, by the projects you approved, shopped for and delivered!

Here is a reminder of a few of the projects your generosity enabled in 2023:

- The Literacy Event raised money for 10 FOCUS Little Libraries to be strategically placed where vulnerable children have limited access to books.
- At the FOCUS on Youth and Homeless Event we unveiled the donation to “Urban Street Angels” of the FOCUS Smart Classroom and Computer Lab to aid youth in everything from acquiring necessary documents to online classes to specialized classes in Excel, Word and Finance.
- Individual projects for children in crisis, such as the child with cancer who needed a bed after an amputation of his leg. Or the young Coronado child for whom we fulfilled a request to replace her much needed mobility chair after hers was stolen.
- Our monthly grants that allow “Got Your Back” to fight childhood hunger, “Birthline” to support at-risk newborns and infants, and our monthly dinners for homeless youth and children at the “YAC Drop-In Center”

We had a lofty goal of raising over \$275,000 in 2023 which we accomplished with the help of the fabulous FOCUS Mission Possible Gala. This has allowed us to support a record number of agencies and expand our reach to help even more children in need!

FOCUS was also blessed with a generous donation of \$50,000 to start an endowment to assist in our fundraising efforts in the future.

I am excited to see what fabulous things FOCUS will accomplish in 2024! FOCUS is one of the most inspiring organizations with which I have had the privilege and pleasure of belonging. Every day these last few years, I have been amazed by the dedication and passion of our Board, members, and supporters. I am humbled to have played a small role in our successful 2023. I thank you for the honor of having been your President.



VP Projects 2023, Sharyn Blongiewicz
sharynb@focus-sdkids.org

Although the holiday season offers many opportunities to provide some joy to San Diego children, FOCUS positively impacts the lives of so many kids all year round! I am so grateful for the opportunity to have served as VP of Projects for the past two years and I am immensely proud of the work we do.

Most recent FOCUS contributions to the aid of at-risk SD youth...

- FOCUS supported San Diego Second Chance, an agricultural program for previously incarcerated youth, as young as 14 years old. This 8-week experience is proven to help change the trajectory of their lives.
- MOM's (Military Outreach Ministries) mission is to serve a vastly underserved population of junior enlisted military. We continue to assist in providing food, holiday meals, toys, cribs and infant needs.
- Community Christian Services helps those who are unable to obtain basic necessities of life. This month we supported their program to provide 300 gift bags to the homeless...including lip balm, knit caps, socks, toothbrushes and travel-size hygiene products.

- ICare is one of the many outstanding programs provided by San Diego Youth Services. Young girls who have been victims of human trafficking are given some items to help in their recovery and their journey to regain dignity and self-esteem. Items such as body wash, nail polish, hair products, deodorant, watercolor paint sets, blankets, fidget toys, journals and development toys for the childcare room were provided.
- David's Harp inspires homeless youth to achieve academic success through music, sound engineering and multimedia production. With the guidance of their dedicated director, these challenged youth, many of whom are homeless, have created and operate a successful and profitable business. To support their efforts to provide some safe housing, FOCUS has helped to furnish a house with some outdoor furniture.
- San Diego Police Department, Juvenile Services Division, works tirelessly to mentor at-risk kids. Their goal is to provide the best opportunity to thrive and to succeed. FOCUS provided 12 Thanksgiving dinners.
- In support of SDPD's Christmas outreach and mentorship programs, FOCUS is providing toys for the children of six local families in need.
- A special holiday dinner is being served at YAC (Youth Assistance Coalition). Preparations have been made to serve up to 65 homeless youth and small children. For several hours a day this homeless teen drop-in center is a safe haven that provides not only a meal but the opportunity for clothing, showers, use of PCs, services counseling and mentoring.
- Additionally, we provided bedroom furnishings for the house YAC is providing limited, short-term and sometimes emergency shelter.



Thank you to all the FOCUS members who have, during this busy time of the year, made time to be FOCUS Shoppers!

**2023 Monthly Grants Continue!
Standby for 2024 Suggested Grants for your review and vote.**

- Once every month we serve dinner to 50 -70 homeless children and teens at the YAC Drop-In Center. Get on the calendar to help ~ you won't be sorry. It's a gratifying and fulfilling experience. Contact Jeri Barsz, who is doing a great job of scheduling the volunteers. <mailto:jeraldinemarie@yahoo.com>
- Thank you to Betsy Burton, our liaison to Birthline, as they provide their excellent guidance to at-risk families and connect them with resources and with adequate necessities and nutrition for newborns and infants.
- Carin Cross is our FOCUS ambassador to Got Your Back; an organization committed to providing weekend food for kids who are dependent on school cafeterias. Thank you, Carin!!



Cause Development and Grants, VP, Lisa Alves

I am thrilled to announce a significant milestone in our cause for childhood literacy: the successful installation of all 10 FOCUS Little Libraries across key communities in San Diego. These libraries have been strategically placed to ensure easy access, making reading a joyful and accessible experience for our children in need. This achievement goes beyond mere installations, it's about cultivating a culture of literacy and empowerment. They represent a promise—a promise to ignite the passion for reading, to expand young minds, and to shape a brighter future for countless children in San Diego.

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the privilege of serving as VP of Cause Development and Grants this year. Every moment dedicated to advancing our causes felt like a genuine gift, an opportunity to make a tangible difference. I'm so proud of what we accomplished together this year. By researching and delving deep into each cause illuminated and exposed critical needs and underscored the challenges faced by our most vulnerable children and our communities. This reinforces our commitment to being both reactive to urgent needs and proactive and targeted, drawing insights gathered from thorough research. Seeing the impact of our events and projects, tailored to these causes, has been immensely gratifying. Our learnings will continue to guide us as a compass, directing us towards executing projects and events directly aligned with our causes, the needs of the children we serve and our community.

Our most vulnerable children in San Diego need our continued support. They need our projects, our advocacy, and our dedication to effecting real change in their lives. There is no better feeling than knowing you made a difference, as a member of FOCUS we all make a difference.



Thank you for setting up
the library! We love it!
We left the Jedi Acad
♡ Maici Family
206 E. James St.



So grateful for this mini library!
So amazing!! Love this! ♡
6/10/23
Love books! Glad others
do too — Bonnie
(neighbor)

Thank you for putting
this up!
♡ your neighbors
at 777 Myra.
The Esquerras
LOAN → KIRAN
LOAN → KIRAN
CHA
LOAN → JOSE



Fundraising/Events Report, VP, Therese Pallares

NOVEMBER 18th was the most successful **FOCUS Holiday Boutique to date!**

This was an important fundraiser for FOCUS, and a fabulous way to support the FOCUS mission while holiday shopping! Ticket sales, raffle tickets, donations and vendor's booth rentals are profit to FOCUS. This year from the support of our members and guests we realized \$13,052 in gross income.

We had a great variety of vendors this year and sold out! Thank you so much for coming and providing your support!

A SPECIAL THANKS!:

Our chairs who took the lead and organized the event, **Sharyn Blongiewicz** and **Pat Robitaille**! You did an amazing job with all of the planning! Our fellow members: **Suzanne Manuel, Lorna Caster-Perez, Carla Bacon, Sharon Shelton, Marjorie Logan, Carol Dobi, Denise Donato-McConnell** and **Juliane Morris** who were pivotal in the help, planning and marketing of the event. There are so many of you who once again gave your time, shuttling people (**Steve Bowman, Gary Plambeck, Ed Robitaille**). Thank you! There were over 55 members who volunteered to make this event a success and you know who you are! Thank you so very much!!

Erin Downing who helped organize and bring JR Optimist youth to this event and to our August gala! They helped to unload and load the vendors, a huge task and FOCUS is so grateful for your help!



Membership, VP, Carla Bacon

It is time to renew FOCUS Membership! You can help us, by going online at www.focus-sdkids.org/membership and renewing for the upcoming year. For your convenience, we will also be at each event to make renewing very simple.

We need many hands to make our events a success. Not only are you doing a wonderful thing for local children in need, but you will have a chance to work with a fun and dedicated group of like-minded individuals. Like me, you may also find so many fellow volunteers will become valued friends.

Looking forward to seeing, and working with you, soon at one of these fabulous events!

Carla Bacon (619) 850-4126 or cbacon@san.rr.com



Executive VP, Operations & Technology Management, Pat Robitaille

It has been a privilege to serve on the FOCUS Board for the past five years. What an amazing team we had this year to drive the organization to a new level. It truly takes a village and so many of you have been a very active participant in this village. My sincere thanks to all of you who stepped up when I put a call out for volunteers. What a team!

2024 Slate of Officers

Thank you to everyone who participated in nominations for our board of directors positions. I am happy to report that we are nearly completed with putting together a fabulous slate. As soon as ready, we will send it out to you for vote.

2024 Calendar

We have secured many dates for 2024 for meetings, events and fundraisers. You can always keep up to date by clicking on the CALENDAR tab on the FOCUS website or going directly to this link: <https://focus-sdkids.org/calendar/>

2024 “Mission Possible V2” Gala

Save the Date:

Saturday, July 13th, on the USS Midway

2024 Monthly Meetings

Save the Date:

Third Thursday of the Month

At CCYC with Dinner and Agency Speaker



Financials & Treasury Management Report from Treasurer, Carol Dobi

November Financials

Assets

Reserve for Approved Project/Grants/Libraries	\$ 40,325
Savings plus Endowment	\$ 120,000
Non-Committed Funds	\$ 223,265
TOTAL Assets	\$ 383,590

Year To Date Approved for Projects/Grants **\$ 167,869**

Year To Date Spending on Projects/Grants **\$ 131,285**

If you would like further financial information or have any questions I am happy to assist.

Email: cdobi@focus-sdkids.org



Marketing & Communications Report, VP, **Juliane Morris**

Your own additional stories and pictures sent for me to post on social media and here in the newsletter help us share the ways FOCUS makes such an impact and how members are involved with agency partners to make connections like no other organization.

Here is a lovely write up and pictures I received from Sharon Shelton :

Again this year, FOCUS partnered with the San Diego Armed Services YMCA (SD ASYMCA) to support military families in San Diego with “special needs” children.

The ASYMCA will host a “Magical Holiday Party” for these children on Monday, Dec 4th and each child will receive several gifts, all purchased through the generosity of FOCUS members and friends. This year the FOCUS “Giving Tree” held 51 ornaments, each ornament representing the Christmas wishes



of special needs children ranging in age from 1 to 15 years of age. This contribution from many FOCUS “Santas” represents over \$3,000 worth of holiday joy for these children. Many thanks to all for once again supporting this wonderful program which supports our active duty military community!



We could use YOUR help promoting the joy of being involved with FOCUS and the wonderful people we are able to serve and lives we can help. One way is simply inviting people to our events. See them online and through our emails, like this one, too.

<https://focus-sdkids.org/>

And if you need a refresher about FOCUS, here's our 40th year video which is a wonderful way to share the FOCUS story,

<https://youtu.be/s9Ci7HuZpdE?si=IZbX-cCya9e4fDoh>

FOCUS Marketing & Communications can always use help with writing, social media posts, photos and videos. Have an idea to help us reach more people? Connect with a board member today.



Our social media, digital and print reach in Coronado, over the bridge in greater San Diego county, and in fact across the nation and beyond continues as we provide updates about our FOCUS work, our partner agencies and opportunities for members to be involved in so many different ways.

If you haven't already followed us and liked us on Facebook, please do so as you wish:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=focusforchildren>

We have several pictures and videos on our Facebook page, including our most recent event, the annual Holiday Boutique!

<https://www.facebook.com/Focus92118/videos/5651043445020608>

<https://www.facebook.com/Focus92118/videos/1288705361792357>

<https://www.facebook.com/Focus92118/videos/1772385776532101>

And, through our cross-posting to Coronado and San Diego area social media pages, our events continue to gain attention and attendance!



FOCUSforChildren is at **Coronado Cays Yacht Club**.

Published by Juliane Morris · November 18 at 6:49 PM · Coronado ·



Join us at our Creating Magic Holiday Party on December 9 at the Coronado Cays Yacht Club!

Lots of tidings of goodness! — Singing Santa with cocktails on the heated patio, plated dinner with wine, festival of boats, presentation on how your support is helping San Diego's most vulnerable children, elegant dessert, musical entertainment from Coronado's own MB2.

Please secure your tickets now as space is limited. We can't wait to see you!... [See more](#)



So many of our local publications and agencies have been extremely supportive of FOCUS, and we've tried to call them out following each event. At this close of 2023 I just want to take a moment to thank them again for continuing to support us!

The **Coronado Times** had this lovely write up for us, thank you so much:

<https://coronadotimes.com/news/2023/11/06/focus-invites-you-to-create-magic-for-children-in-need-dec-9/>

And the **Coronado Eagle & Journal** had this supportive write up for us, thank you!

https://www.coronadonewsca.com/news/coronado_island_news/focus-holiday-boutique/image_9c35832c-8d7e-11ee-9afe-c37dc2a27579.html

And **Crown City Magazine** has provided a feature story this year for us and several ads and promotions. Thank you all.

Thank you for letting me serve in this role this year.

- Juliane



Wishing a hearty “Happy Birthday!” to all of our members celebrating their December birthdays!

12/1	Carmel Fleck
12/1	Randall Salinas
12/3	Lisa Alves
12/6	Barbara Donahue
12/7	Brian Hull
12/9	Diane Albano
12/15	Mike Durgin
12/21	Carla O’Connell
12/27	Pat McDonough

If you would like your birthday acknowledged in our newsletter, please be sure to send us your birthday by emailing the month and day to membership@focus-sdkids.org or please provide it when you renew your membership.

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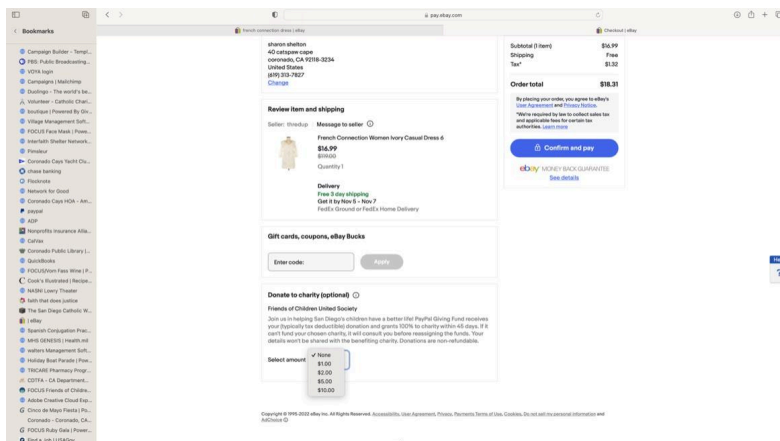


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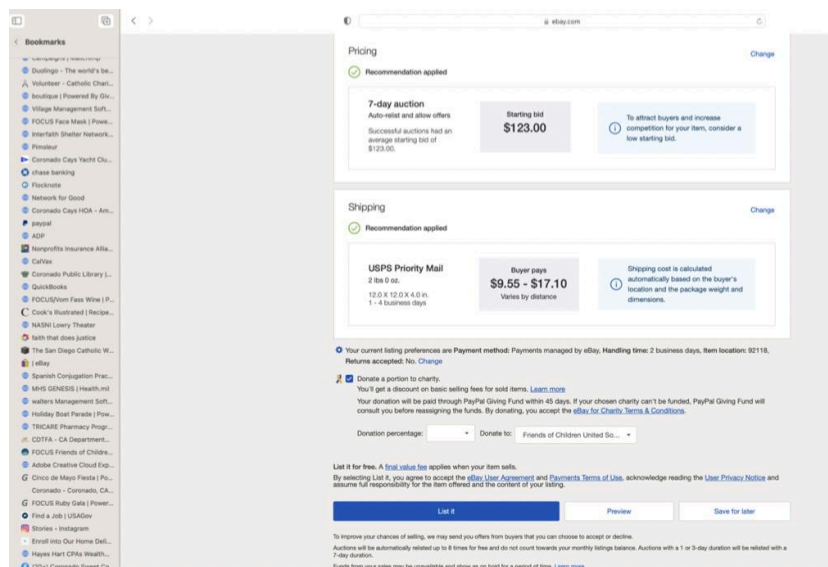
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If you are a buyer, just Add Friends of Children United Society (FOCUS) as your Favorite charity on @eBay. You can directly donate to our cause when purchasing up to \$10.00. Every little bit counts!



If you are a seller, at the very bottom of your item listing you will see, donate a portion to charity. Just decide what portion 10-100% that you would like to donate to FOCUS.



Another simple and easy way to donate throughout the year!



PO Box 180023
Coronado, Ca 92178
www.focus-sdkids.org

Until next month! Be well.



Your FOCUS team.