



The story of Stockings from Karen

Stockings from Karen was founded by LeeAnn Petersen, a former foster child who is now a DC government relations professional. The organization is named for Karen Schwartzkopf who is LeeAnn's Foster mother and who touched the lives of over 100 foster children where LeeAnn grew up in San Bernardino, California. After suddenly losing their 12 year old daughter to a brain aneurism, Karen and Dave Schwartzkopf knew they had more love to give and opened their home and their hearts to foster children. LeeAnn arrived at the Schwartzkopfs home the day after her 15th birthday in November. That December LeeAnn received her very first Christmas stocking ever. LeeAnn fondly remembers the care and love that Karen put in to the girls' Christmas stocking – each one tailored to its prospective owner. All stockings had the usual staples of teen hygiene care and maintenance: deodorant, razors, mouthwash, tooth brush, lip balm, hair bands, barrettes, lotion. Then there were the items that made you feel beautiful: makeup, nail polish, hosiery, earrings. Karen would always throw in a few things to customize the stocking for each girl. For LeeAnn it meant something with her topaz birthstone, something related to sports, a cassette tape of new wave music and a fashion magazine. Whether Karen knew it or not, these stockings built confidence and gave the girls a sense of self-esteem and pride. The stockings were the highlight of the occasion for anyone who lived at or visited the Schwartzkopf's home at Christmas. To LeeAnn they represented stability in a time of emotional upheaval and confidence for an ugly duckling looking to become a beautiful swan. Most of all, the stockings let the girls know someone cared about them enough to make them feel special.

In an effort to pay it forward and provide this same boost for today's young women in foster care, Stockings from Karen will donate Christmas stockings to the CASA programs in DC and Montgomery County to be distributed to the teen girls on their case load. These stockings will be paid for and assembled by donors. Each donor will pick a theme (sports, academics, music, fashion) and shop for a girl to create for her a stocking they feel is really special. Each stocking should be valued under \$30. In order for each girl to receive the same quality of stocking it is important that donors refrain from purchasing overly expensive items.

Staple items (travel sizes and fragrance free preferred): deodorant, lotion, nail files, toothbrush, tooth paste, socks, hosiery, gloves. We also need the stockings themselves.

Makeup and hair accessories: Foster girls have many different ethnic backgrounds so please buy neutral tones for makeup and stick to hair accessories rather than hair care products. Items needed include eye shadow, mascara, brow liner, lip stick or gloss, nail polish, rubber bands, barrettes, bobby pins, head bands.

Stockings will be customized according to one of four themes so we welcome donations in these categories:

Academic: books, book markers, puzzles, crosswords, calculator, ruler, pens, pencils, calendar, appointment book

Sports: head bands, athletic socks, Sports Illustrated, calorie counter, pedometer, jump rope

Fashion: fashion magazines such as Elle, Ebony, Uptown; accessories, sewing kit, costume jewelry

Music: magazine's such as Vibe and Rolling Stone; earphones, books about artists/musicians, music themed accessories

Things NOT to include in the stockings: anything edible, anything with alcohol like mouth wash or cough syrup, pierced earrings, anything with explicit words like on some CDs, phone accessories.

All stockings and supplies should be delivered to Stockings from Karen at 9919 Meriden Road, Potomac, MD 20854 no later than December 3. If you have questions or need more information please contact LeeAnn at leeann@womeninadvocacy.com or 202-744-6077. Thank you for supporting Stockings from Karen and brightening a teen girl's Christmas.