

NEWS

Christine Sisko took 'very big leap' to start Sisko Kidz nonprofit

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Christine Sisko knew she wanted to help her community. Working a 9-to-5 desk job just wasn't cutting it anymore.

With the help of her husband, Steve Sisko, she started the nonprofit Sisko Kidz Foundation from her kitchen in 2015. The foundation is geared toward “managing transitions for vulnerable children and adults through education, donations and family collaborations.”

“There was a lot of learning along the way,” Christine Sisko said. “My husband and I just happened to see a couple of people in our local community that needed help. It just kind of started from there—just some random people from our community, and we'd go out and find what they were looking for or needed. From there, we just wanted to start our own nonprofit.”

The foundation has come a long way in a short time.

“For the longest time, we just ran the nonprofit out of the house,” Sisko said. “We got a storage unit and started picking up donations, kind of like the Salvation Army or the (National) Kidney Foundation. When people needed help, we'd take them over to the storage garage and just let them pick out whatever we had there. Then, we just kind of grew really big really fast.”

Resignation from day job let to full-time nonprofit work

Sisko was feeling restless working as a retention specialist at Nationwide. So, she resigned in December 2016 to concentrate on the foundation full time.

“I kind of knew that this is what I wanted to do,” she said. “I wanted out of the 9-to-5 desk job that I had and I quit my career to do the nonprofit work full time. It was a very big leap.”

The foundation is a part of a two-sided business along with B33 Bingo, 3300 Refugee Road, Columbus.

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“So, a lot of our (bingo) proceeds go to help fund what we do as a nonprofit,” Sisko said. “On top of running the nonprofit, I also have to run the bingo nights.”

“In 2018, the local bingo hall was going out of business. So, they asked me if I wanted to put my nonprofit in there and run bingo. In the state of Ohio, you can run a nonprofit bingo hall if you have an actual nonprofit. So, it just kind of all fell into my lap.”

Sisko’s generosity is generational. Instead of giving gifts on Mother’s Day, Sisko’s mother, Debbie Unger, would volunteer.

“I’ve been doing work like this since I was a little girl,” Sisko said. “We would always go do Meals on Wheels, or we would go to the dog shelter and help.”

So, why was it so important to Unger?

“I would say that I have everything I need,” Unger said. “So we would pick a local charity and go do something with our day. I grew up poor, and it was really difficult. Just knowing how badly we struggled when we grew up, I didn’t want other families

...”

Sisko Kidz Foundation helps with food, school supplies and much more

Hollie Dyer set up a GoFundMe to get her daughter Hannah Wackernagle a tricycle so that she could exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“My husband and I ride our bicycles during the summer, and (Hannah) was feeling left out,” Dyer said. “So, we wanted to get her bike. When we looked at them, there was no way I was ever going to be able to afford them. So, I posted on Facebook (telling) friends if I (started) a GoFundMe, we could get Hannah this adaptive bike.”

Hannah, 26, has Down syndrome and needed a custom-made bike — a two-seat black tricycle.

“It was not even an hour after I posted that on Facebook that Christine reached out,” Dyer said. “She said, ‘Take down the GoFundMe post. I’m paying for the bicycle with my foundation.’ Immediately, that day, I sent her the link, and she ordered the bike. They’re custom-built, so it took them a while, but it finally came just in time for Hannah’s birthday. Hannah absolutely loves the bike—she adores the bike.”

But Sisko Kidz has done so much more. The foundation is wide-ranging, helping put food on the table for 30 families during the pandemic. They filled 150 backpacks with school supplies and paid overdue bills for school lunches.

The foundation has also helped with families affected by the opioid crisis and women dealing with domestic violence.

“We deal with families in all spectrums,” Sisko said. “I’ve always said that I’d fight for the underdog, because I was there at one point in my life, being a single mom. I just couldn’t catch that break. I remember how hard it was for me, and the tears. So, once we dove into it, we really saw a need for anybody going through any type of transitional period in their lives—no matter what it is. It kind of just evolved from there.”

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