

Mother honors late daughter by improving women's lives

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■ Real mother triumphs in daughter's 'Prize Winner.' 7C

COLLINGSWOOD

Two years ago, Susan Rose's world crashed around her when the oldest of her four daughters, Lauren Albert, was killed in an automobile accident while vacationing in Morocco.

Rose, a Cherry Hill resident and former Camden County registrar of deeds, was so shaken, she had to leave her state government job.

"For a year, I sat in a chair," she said.

Then she got up. And while the empty place in her heart remained — and always will — Rose began to channel her grief into making life better for others.

To honor the memory of Albert, 40 — a mother of three and an activist who used to work at a medical institute — Rose founded the Lauren Rose Albert

Foundation: A Legacy of Love, Laughter and Light. Its mission is to bring sunshine into the lives of women in need and help women fulfill their potential.

"I knew I had to create this foundation and touch people the way Lauren did," Rose said.

On Friday, she did just that at the Greater Collingswood Children's Center. The center provides subsidized day care for working families and parents going to school, so they can find better jobs.

The foundation donated baskets of toiletries to 51 surprised mothers, grandmothers and caregivers at the center for a Mother's Day fashion show featuring its 54 tots, ages 2 through 6.

The baskets, part of the foundation's "Mothers Matter" project, included items donated by businesses, groups and individuals.

"These baskets are very nice. The contents will definitely be used," said Mary Gonzalez of Camden, a phlebotomist at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. She received hers from her grandson, 4-year-old Daniel Torres, whom she has been raising since he was 3 months old.

Xiulan Zhang of Collingswood, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania who plans to return to China to resume her career as an ophthalmologist, received a similar basket from her 5-year-old daughter, Yingying Pan. Cindy Sacharow of Blackwood, who attends nursing school at Camden County College, accepted one from her son, 5-year-old Walter.

For Maria Brown of Pennsauken, the fashion show and accompanying basket highlighted her week.

"This is great," the medical assistant said as her 4-year-old daughter, Aspen, eyed the toiletries.

Rose's foundation distributed additional baskets to two other day care centers and two women's shelters. In all, 260 baskets went out during the past week.



Marla Brown of Pennsauken smiles as she receives a basket of personal care items from her daughter Aspen, 4, at the Greater Collingswood Children's Center Friday. The center held a Mother's Day fashion show. In the background is Susan Rose, founder of the Lauren Rose Albert Foundation, which provided the gift baskets.

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Susan Rose, founder of the Lauren Rose Albert Foundation, and Sarah Orchard (rear) carry baskets of personal care products into the Greater Collingswood Children's Center. The foundation donated the baskets to 51 women at the center for a Mother's Day fashion show.

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At the Collingswood center, visitors also received cards outlining women's safe travel tips, part of the foundation's Women's Safe Travel Initiative.

"Anything having to do with car safety is near to my heart," Rose said.

She believes her daughter's death could have been avoided if cars in Morocco had seat belts.

"Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death of Americans abroad," Rose said.

The foundation is also working with the Association of Safe International Travel to establish safety standards that will include establishing mandatory seat belt installation in all tourist vehicles.

The foundation awards college scholarships to young women — the first two were handed out last June — and has sponsored a coat drive. "We want to find out where women are not being served. We want to fill the gaps," Rose said.

One gap is in car maintenance, she said.

"Women going back to work don't have the money for car upkeep. We plan eventually to have car clinics, as well as car safety kits," she said.

The foundation also is forming a resource network for young women in need of services such as tutoring and finding appropriate clothing for job interviews.

It will sponsor a golf tournament to raise funds for its projects on June 18 at Merchantville Country Club. For information on the tournament, call Michael Carmody at (856) 310-0717.

For information about "Mothers Matter," call Rose at (856) 428-7458. The foundation has a Web site, www.laurenlegacy.org.