

Discovery
LAND COMPANY

FOUNDATION



DLCF Director Christy Nichols (center) visits with some of her heroes: the 2010 Foster Club All-Stars.

BRIDGING THE GAPS

One young woman's story brings the Discovery Land Company Foundation mission into focus.

THE VOICE IS ABRUPT. "Pack your things." A hand holds out two trash bags. She waits for a moment, but no one offers to help. She goes to her room and does as she's told. She packs everything she has. There's not even enough to fill two trash bags. She is leaving one foster home for another, and there is no explanation.

She lifts her trash bags, and she goes. It is not the first time; it is not the last. Over the course of 11 years, Julia Charles will change homes more than a dozen times. Questions spin in her head. Where will I sleep tonight? Why am I not worth the time it takes to explain what's going on? Why did the social worker have to come on my 12th birthday?

Julia Charles' experiences in the foster care system point out gaps in the public programs that have to cope with the more than 424,000 foster children in the United States today. While there are plenty of good people working long and hard on those children's behalf, underfunded and understaffed government programs cannot

do it all. Private groups must step in to fill the needs. That's precisely why the Discovery Land Company Foundation was started four years ago with contributions from Discovery members and friends.

In its short life, the Foundation has already touched an estimated 1,200-plus children, through funds for safe homes for abused children, programs that teach job and life skills, programs for education, school scholarships, and not-so-little things like participation costs for local athletic teams. The Foundation works with respected charities across the country and abroad—from the Children's Village in Coeur d'Alene and Sunday's Child Foundation in Kona, Hawaii, to Los Niños del Capitan in Los Cabos, Mexico, and Every Child Counts in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas—to address the shortcomings, improve the system, and protect the children. Many of the charities are in Discovery Club communities so that members and employees can connect with them.

But lists can numb. What you need to remember is what keeps Foundation director Christy Nichols fighting.

"These children are innocent," she says. "They were born into circumstances that are not their fault. Even though they experience these challenges, their hearts are resilient. They still have so much love to give, even though they've gone through adversity. Many foster youths strive to help younger children in similar situations."

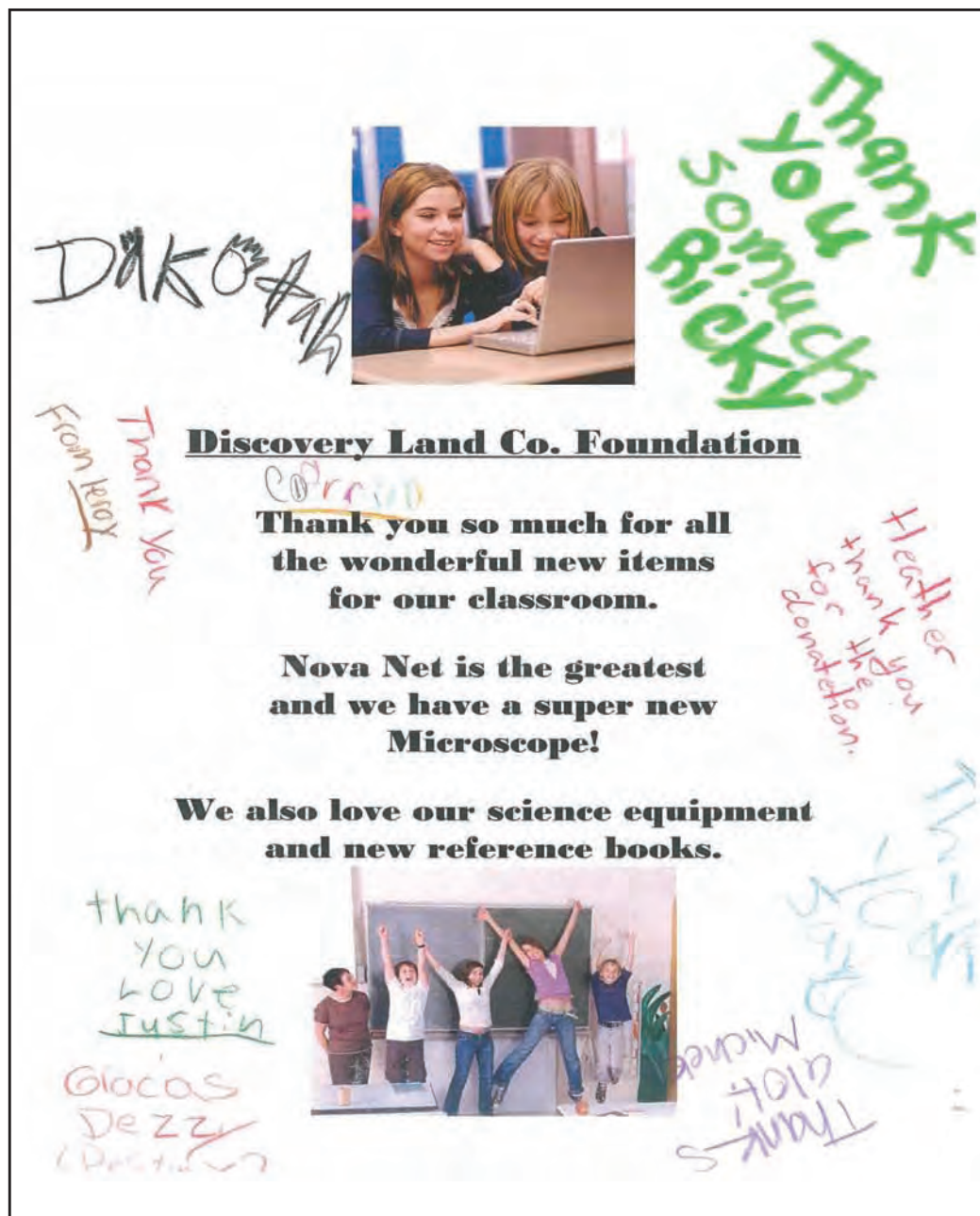
Today Julia Charles is a success story. At 28, she attends the University of Massachusetts, where she is completing a doctorate in African American Studies. She is out of the foster care system and has an adoptive mother who loves her. After making her own way through the rough-and-tumble foster care system, Charles could have turned her back, but she didn't. Instead she is a member of the Foster Club All-Stars, which

sponsors young adults who once lived in foster care and who now travel the country mentoring other foster kids. It's another of the inspiring programs that the Foundation supports.

"These kids entering care now," says Charles, "they're in my same situation, and they need my help. They don't hand you a pamphlet when you come into care and say, 'These are the things you should expect—lonely Christmases and to flip out on Mother's Day.' I don't want another child to come into care thinking this thing defines who

they are. I want them to know that while it does change your life forever, it can also change your life for the good." Especially when a group like the Discovery Land Company Foundation steps in to help.

"There are a lot of foster kids who feel like their dreams are pipe dreams, but it only takes one person to believe that they can accomplish what they want," says Charles. "Heroes wear everyday clothes. They're living their lives like everyone else, but they show up just in the nick of time to rescue people." —KEN McALPINE



A thank you letter from Children's Village, near Gozzer in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where the DLCF donated funds for accredited online education for displaced children, allowing them to maintain their grade levels during their stay.

FOSTERING SOLUTIONS

Children just like Julia are silently suffering around the corner from you and me. We may not know about them, since the system that is designed to legally protect them also conceals their identities and case details. But their sadness and difficulties continue precisely because these children are not readily visible and because the avenues to help them are not always direct. Shortfalls in an underfunded government system create the necessity for charitable organizations to step in and help fill the needs of foster children.

The Discovery Land Company Foundation forges paths to these kids in need by proactively funding the programs and services of valuable charities and also by helping the children themselves:

- at the shelters that care for them when they're removed from family, or when they're with their homeless family, which may be seeking services to rebuild their lives.
- through programs for them and their foster families.

The Foundation also provides help when, at 18 to 21 years of age, these children lose supplemental government funding and no longer have the support of their foster parents. At that point, many of these children have nowhere to go.

The caregivers working in the shelters, schools, and transitional living programs supported by the Foundation maintain connections with local, state, and federal organizations. They share legal policy information with the Foundation and pass along news of how Foundation funds have specifically helped children. Therefore, your support to the Foundation directly strengthens deserving children, some of whom are shown in these photographs.

Many people have the passion and ability to help but don't understand where or how to begin. There are several ways each of us can get closer to changing a child's life. Mentoring, court advocacy, weekend or part-time foster parenting, and hiring foster youth interns all present enriching opportunities. The most powerful solution is adoption. Foster youth and their siblings, including teens and adults, can be adopted at any age. As one All-Star wrote, "You never age out of family." If you would like to learn more about individually participating in the lives of disadvantaged children who need adult guidance, please contact me for information and introductions. I look forward to connecting you with opportunities.

Cheers to the Discovery members and employees who have adopted, fostered, and mentored children!

Christy Nichols
Director
Discovery Land Company Foundation

For information on the Foundation and how you can help go to www.discoverylandco.com/dlc_foundation or contact Christy Nichols at cnichols@discoverylandco.com.

THE DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY FOUNDATION:

1. Reaches individual children and groups of children.
2. Funds education, counseling, emergency and medical needs, clothing donations, programs for life and career skills, and athletic outdoor opportunities.
3. Nurtures local and national affiliations, enhancing our ability to help more children effectively.
4. Introduces nonprofits to each other so they can collaborate or advise each other about program development and ideas.
5. Creates new programs where needs exist.



The cheerful and loving kids of Every Child Counts in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas, pose for a portrait. Here, children with special mental and physical needs receive close attention, education, and life skills from nurturing instructors and caregivers. DLCF donates scholarship funds and program support.



A young man at Children's Village in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, works on his science-gravity project, which was part of an educational donation by the DLCF. Though he arrived fearful and withdrawn, having suffered abuse at home and at school, within two months he had built this model and was demonstrating it to the class. He is one of many children who have been encouraged, loved, taught, and cared for at Children's Village and have benefited from Foundation contributions.



Poem and Drawing Posted at the Safehouse of the Desert

Keep hope in your mind and faith in your heart
Because no matter how bad things get it's not
the end

It's only a step closer for the end of the worst
and whole new beginning ready to start

Broken hearts and nonstop tears will
eventually mend

Someone caring and loving will walk into your
life when you least expect it

Don't turn your back on your problems and
fears

Which are always present and suspected
If you do you will only find yourself breaking
down into tears

Instead step up with your strongest foot and
face them

In the end you will discover a new and
improved you