

Friends of SoZo Kids Inc.



2025 Annual Report

Thank you, “Friends”,

Our mission is to **connect the time, talent, and treasures** of residents of The Villages and surrounding communities to **meet the basic, educational, and emergency needs** of children and their families living in poverty in the Ocala National Forest. We are an all-volunteer organization, and 95% of funds received are used to benefit the SoZo Kids we serve. 2025 was a very successful year, and we want to detail the many ways in which they benefited from our work together.

Meeting Basic Needs

Back-to-School Bash (Sneakers, Clothing, Underwear, Socks, Toiletry/Hygiene Items)

The 2025 Back-To-School Bash, organized by the staff of the Help Agency of the Forest (SoZo Kids) and our enthusiastic volunteers, connected the essential items to the children preparing for a new school year. Thanks to generous donations and community financial support, 800 children each received two pairs of new sneakers, personally fitted to ensure comfort and confidence. In addition, 1,900 backpacks filled with grade-specific supplies were distributed to students from elementary through high school, helping them start the year equipped for success.

Along with high quality merchandise mentioned above, there were 1,000 packs of underwear/bras, over 10,000 pairs of socks, and hundreds of toiletry and hygiene items provided for the students to take as much as they needed. Volunteers also gave haircuts and painted nails, ensuring that SoZo Kids had everything they needed to start the school year looking good and feeling great!

Christmas Wish List Project

Every child looks forward to a magical Christmas morning, and thanks to your generosity, those dreams became reality for our 200 After-School children. Together we filled all Christmas Wish Lists and provided 60 brand-new bikes. Whether you personally selected gifts or contributed funds, your support brought joy and excitement to their families.

Holiday Meals

Holiday meals are more than just food-they create opportunities for families to gather, share stories, and build cherished memories. Through our Fun Community Rival Campaign, your generosity helped us raise \$24,700 for individual holiday turkeys and hams. Additional funding provided \$20,000 worth of restaurant-prepared boxed meals, serving up to 1,080 individuals. The Help Agency distributed these meals to families in need, setting new records for our organization. Your support ensured that SoZo Kids and their families enjoyed a warm memorable holiday dinner.

Meeting Educational Needs

After-School Educational Program

Our dedicated “Friends” volunteers lead and assist with activities for children kindergarten through 5th grade, in partnership with the Help Agency. Early exposure to STEM-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math-has proven to boost academic success and career readiness. Through regular robotics sessions and STEM play packs featuring gears, circuit boards, Legos, and magnets, we spark curiosity and learning. Volunteers also promote literacy by reading with the children and giving books away. Additionally Life Enrichment segments

like frugal shopping, hygiene, pictures and customs of other countries, set a knowledge base of a potential different path for their future.

After-School/Summer Program Nutritious Meals

Many SoZo Kids face food insecurity at home, but thanks to our volunteer meal providers, we provided over 8,000 nutritious cafeteria-style meals. Special groups, as the Men's Christian Study Group, host on-site grilling! In addition, meal packages were sent home with the kids for their families to receive nourishment as well.

Overnight Camp SoZo Program

Despite the challenge of using temporary facilities for Summer Camp in 2025, your donations ensured that 200 SoZo Kids enjoyed a three-day/two-night camp experience. This program offers a healthy escape from daily hardships, with fun activities and leadership training for the older children. Many SoZo Kids alumni return as counselors for the camp inspiring the next generation.

Little League Program

The Babe Ruth Little League program, led by the Help Agency staff, continues to thrive in the forest. In 2025, we funded \$10,000 in league fees for 40 girls and boys and provided new uniforms and equipment. The team's hard work paid off- they reached playoffs in Orlando, and we sponsored the entire trip for an additional \$4,000. This program helps kids build friendship, teamwork and leadership skills that last a lifetime

Meeting Emergency/Immediate Needs

Grants Awarded to the Help Agency of the Forest

Because of your financial generosity, Friends of SoZo Kids provided over \$100,000 in grants to the Help Agency. These funds supported transportation repairs and fuel, supplies, storage, playground improvements, and enhancements at the After-School sites. Your contributions have significantly improved the infrastructure and facilities for both children and volunteers, making a lasting impact on our community.

Thank You for Being a Friend of SoZo Kids!

We invite you to review our 2025 IRS-Form 990 on our website at

www.FriendsOfSoZoKids.com. Our 2025 IRS-Form 990 will be filed by May 15, 2026.