

# Project HEART Welcome Newsletter



Welcome back to 2021-2022 school year. Project HEART is the School District of Manatee County's Homeless Education Program. As many of you are aware, the McKinney-Vento Act for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth requires school districts to designate a local homeless liaison to carry out the duties described in the Act and to inform school personnel of these duties. Our district's homeless liaison and contact information is below:

Lissette Fernández, MSW, LCSW  
941-751-6550 ext. 2293  
[fernandezl@manateeschools.net](mailto:fernandezl@manateeschools.net)

[Read More About The Liaison Duties](#)

Also, each school in our district has an identified HERO (Homeless Education Resource Officer) that acts as the contact and expert on the McKinney-Vento rights for our students and families.

[2021-2022 HERO Contact list](#)

## Upcoming Training

Homeless Education Resource Officers (HERO) yearly training on

August 31 at the PSC from 8:30-11:00AM

## Recent News

Last year, our district identified 1297 homeless students, mostly through the efforts of school staff. We encourage you to visit the [FDOE Homeless Education Program](#) website for further information.

## SCHOOL SUPPLIES

School supplies will continue to be sent to schools for students that will be attending school partially or full time; for students choosing full time e-learning we will arrange with the caregiver the best option to either pick up or deliver.



## BIO-FORMS

As a reminder, please ask your registrar (or if you are one) to send bio-forms or student info to us where the families have identified themselves as homeless. Our staff will do an intake assessment in order to determine qualification.



## Meet our staff

### Lissette Fernandez

Lissette is our Program Coordinator, District Homeless Liaison and Foster Care Liaison for the School District of Manatee County. Lissette is a graduate of University of South Florida with her degree in Masters in Clinical Social Work. Lissette has a heart for helping others, she enjoys coordinating services for homeless and foster care students and providing our Spanish speaking families with educational classes through the School of Hope program. She is also a volunteer Firefighter/EMT, a Certified Trauma Therapist and Substance Abuse Therapist. In her spare time Lissette works on providing substance abuse counseling for Spanish speakers and works as a Trauma counselor during weekend camps for children whose parents have substance abuse issues.

Lissette has an identical twin sister, is an animal lover and has a passion for traveling and exploring the world. She is also an avid scuba diver, CrossFit athlete and an adventure thrill seeker.



[Contact Lissette](#)

## Brenda Rossi



Brenda is our bilingual Elementary Education Homeless Liaison and Case Manager. Brenda is a graduate of the University of South Florida with her degree in Social and Behavioral Sciences/Psychology. Helping others is her heart beat. She enjoys reaching out to the families under the Project HEART program and working with school staff to make sure our students are prepared for school and are able to succeed.

Brenda also serves as the fund raiser coordinator and board director for Hungers End in Manatee County. She has helped bridge a relationship with the Project HEART families by providing groceries from their pantry, clothing, bicycles, and holiday gifts. This past year, she became the bilingual liaison for Hope 4 Communities, who will also be partnering with Project HEART in the near future. She is married and has a son who attends high school at Sarasota Military Academy. She enjoys traveling, volunteering, and attending church.

[Contact Brenda](#)

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## Jessie Schmeltz

Jessie is our Secondary Education Homeless Liaison. She comes to us from the Midwest. Her background in nursing describes what she does best – being compassionate and reaching out to those in need. Jessie has enhanced our Project Heart program with her ability to connect with our homeless students in secondary school and unaccompanied homeless youth. Jessie goes above and beyond to help them find the resources to remain in school and succeed academically. She is an avid volunteer at her local church. She loves spending time with her son Ryder, and pouring into the lives of others. Jessie likes the outdoors and enjoys camping, fishing and hiking!



[Contact Jessie](#)

[Visit our website](#)

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PSC**  
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