

Aging out of foster care in Delaware

In Delaware, young people age out of foster care at age 18 or upon graduation from high school. They enter the adult world often with an extended history of no stability, little trust in "the system" and people in general and few skills that support them being fully independent.

Having been told where and with whom to live (often experiencing many changes) and what to do with little opportunity to make the decisions, many just want to be free of the system. But then what?

With few resources, they set out into the adult world. But they aren't alone. ILYA, a Social Justice Program at First Unitarian Church of Wilmington is here to help.

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**First Unitarian Church of
Wilmington
Supports Students**

Student Care Packages

Can you help a young person who has aged out of foster care going on to further education?

ILYA

Independent Living
For Young Adults

Supporting social justice in
our community





"Getting packages from my contact person helped me hang in there when I thought I couldn't make it at exam time. Every time I ate a cookie, I knew someone cared and was cheering me on" - SR

How it works

Each September and January, students who are starting classes in post-secondary education (college, university, technical school, etc.) are linked up with a volunteer who commits to sending them "care packages" 5 times a year.

The Student Care Packages are intended to be morale boosters when the anxiety of starting at a new school or the beginning of a new year gets tough... when studying gets tough. They help calm nerves at exam time... just knowing someone cares and is cheering for you. Getting a package says "I'm thinking of you" and "I care"... it means so much.

The packages contain all kinds of things from snacks and goodies to various useful items and clothing, Sometimes the basic necessities of living are requested,

Volunteers who send packages we call a "Contact Person". They are someone who wants to spread cheer and encouragement to a young person who's working hard to build a good future. They receive emails or texts confirming the student has received their package. Sometimes that develops into a beautiful relationship. This encouragement can mean the difference between dropping out or pushing through to the successful completion of studies.

Sending Student Care Packages can definitely contribute to a young person's successful transition to adulthood.

**The ILYA team thanks
you!!!**

What should I send?

Of course each student is unique, but some things seem to be standard "winners". We ask students what their preferences are and pass them on if we get any. But we also encourage the contact person to ask the student what is most desirable.

Here are some suggestions to get started:

- Snacks
 - Cookies
 - Chips
 - Popcorn
 - Nuts
 - candy
- Gift cards
 - Walmart
 - Target
 - iTunes
 - Dunkin Donuts
 - Panera
 - Brew Ha Ha
 - Boston Market
- Bus Pass
- Personal care items
 - Shower gel
 - Toothpaste

Enclose a personal friendly note. Maybe tell a bit about yourself so the student can start to know who you are and invite them to share their likes and desires. But don't be upset if the response is minimal. It takes a while to build trust in the relationship.