



CARLINE JEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"All I care about is her health," Aleida Morales Escobar, of Pompano Beach, says about daughter Isabella, 8. The family receives help from Gateway Community Outreach, a Deerfield Beach-based nonprofit.

# Love keeps hope alive

Medical issues prevent girl from experiencing many of childhood's joys

BY LISA J. HURIASH  
Staff writer

POMPANO BEACH — A social butterfly at heart, Isabella Escobar has clipped wings.

The 8-year-old doesn't leave her house unless it's for a doctor's appointment. She doesn't go to school — a tutor comes to her twice a week. She doesn't go to the playground when other children are there — the slides and swings are hers alone at night when it's empty. A trip to Chuck E. Cheese is out of the question.

Suffering from a host of medical issues including cerebral palsy and seizures, her parents can't take the chance of other children making Isabella sick. Even a cold can spiral out of control and lead to a hospital stay.

"She doesn't know how to play" with other children, said Aleida Morales Escobar, her mom. "She is in and out of the hospital on a continuous basis. I wish she could have a normal childhood. I know she's not going to be able to."

The Escobar family receives help from Gateway Community Outreach, a Deerfield Beach-based nonprofit that provides needy families with emergency rent and mortgage



assistance, financial seminars and food. The organization is among dozens of nonprofit groups supported by the Sun Sentinel Children's Fund.

Escobar was excited to be a first-time mom and said she dreamed for her daughter to become a doctor "to have a better life than myself."

But her life-long wait for a daughter turned to anxiety as her baby was continuously sick. She said her first pediatrician dismissed her worries as new mom stress, so she found a new doctor who discovered Isabella had a stroke in utero.

Isabella's body is partially paralyzed and she can't use her right hand. She didn't walk until she was 4 and has been diagnosed with developmental delays.

Escobar was forced to quit her job as a clerk at a lending company to care for Isabella. Taking her to therapists and doctors became a full-time job.

As medical bills mounted, the family went to Gateway in 2010 for help

## How to donate

For every family or person featured in Sun Sentinel Children's Fund stories, there are many more in need. The program spotlighted here, Gateway Community Outreach, wants to help more of them through the Children's Fund.

The nonprofit agency offers food, case management and emergency rent and mortgage assistance, financial seminars and referrals for medical services, utilities, transportation and homeless services. For information, call Gateway Community Outreach at 954-725-8434 or go to [gcoflorida.org](http://gcoflorida.org).

Your gift to the Sun Sentinel Children's Fund will be matched at 50 cents on the dollar by the McCormick Foundation, expanding the reach your gift will make. In addition, all administrative expenses are paid by the Sun Sentinel and the McCormick Foundation.

To contribute, go to [SunSentinelchildrensfund.org](http://SunSentinelchildrensfund.org) or call 800-519-2480.

## Fund facts

For information, go to [SunSentinel.com/childrensfund](http://SunSentinel.com/childrensfund)

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BY BEN WOLFORD  
Staff writer

BOYNTON BEACH — There were only so many ways to calm down M... Camberdella, and his... had tried them all that... ing a year ago.

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## FUND

Continued from Page 1B

feeding the 20-pound, 5-year old. Isabella is lactose intolerant, has acid reflux, gastritis and severe allergies. She is unable to process regular food and is on a doctor-ordered organic diet.

The agency provided organic food, including milk and produce, a mortgage payment and help with the water bill.

"They are my angels," said Escobar. "They give you support," she said.

Gateway officials said they could appreciate the family's financial woes amplified by medical issues. "Their needs are great," said Carol Ray, the agency's president and CEO. "We are thankful for our small participation in this family's recovery."

With Christmas approaching, Isabella is hoping Santa remembers her. But her parents' wish can't be bought. Said her mom: "All I care about is her health. I'm hoping she gets better."

See FUND, 5B