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# Little patients get Valentine's surprise

**Jessica Coleman**  
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Little hearts were the big focus at a special Valentine's Day party Saturday at St. Ann Catholic Church in Gulf Breeze.

Hearts of Hope, an organization founded to provide a network for families of children with congenital heart disease, threw the party to help people whose lives have been touched by the illness.

Chris Ammons, Patoya Henderson and Shelia Allen, coordinators of the organization, said they wanted to do something to raise awareness during Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week, which began Wednesday and runs through Valentine's Day.

"Our kids have done so well that we wanted to embrace other families that are going through this for the first time," Henderson said.

Ashley Presley, a member of Hearts of Hope, helped distribute prayer blankets to children attending the party. The blankets, with knotted fringe, symbolized hope.

"For every prayer that is said for the child, you tie a knot," she said. "Every child will receive a blanket."

Several organizations and companies provided goods and services to help with the event. The Escambia County Sheriff Department's band, Southern Heat, provided the music. Domino's donated pizza, and Monique Holland, a member of First United Methodist Church of Pace, made a Valentine's Day cake for the children.

The group's next meeting is March 19 at the Lucia M. Tryon Library on the Pensacola Junior College Pensacola campus at 5:30 p.m. The meeting is open to the public, and health-care professionals and family members of children affected by congenital heart disease are encouraged to attend.

For more information about congenital heart disease, visit [tchin.org/aware](http://tchin.org/aware). For more information about Hearts of Hope, contact Patoya Henderson at 477-4044 or Shelia Allen 587-2016.

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