

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!

10 Year Old Girl Sets Up Lemonade Stand To Help Rebuild Her Family's Home

A 10-year-old Lutz girl is keeping her chin up and striving to make lemonade out of lemons in an effort to help her family rebuild their home after a fire savaged the property in 2013.

While the De La Sala family had insurance to cover their home following the March 14, 2013, fire, it seems the contractor hired didn't quite live up to the task.

"It was supposed to take six months (to rebuild)," said Jenn De La Sala.

Fast-forward two years and the home is mostly a shell and the family is still living in an apartment – paying out rent and a monthly mortgage.

The contractor has since been fired from the job, De La Sala said, but her family had to use part of the insurance money earmarked for replacing their belongings to pay subcontractors the general contractor did not. Plus, the money for the rebuild was already paid out to the contractor, so the cash to complete the job provided by the insurance company has also dried up, leaving the family strapped and caught in limbo paying for two homes when they only want one – their own.

And, that's why 10-year-old Alyssa De La Sala wants to turn lemons into lemonade. She's hoping a lemonade stand set up on the family's property Saturday, May 16, will help raise enough money to assist them in completing the rebuilding effort.

"I'm trying to help them by raising money at my lemonade stand this weekend that my mommy's friend Natalie is helping me with," Alyssa explained in a letter to a local radio show. "It's called the Help Get Us Home (fundraiser) and our motto is when life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

Alyssa's lemonade stand is set to open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 2217 Groveland Drive in Lutz where the family's half-built home stands. Donations may also be made to the family through a GoFundMe campaign that has been established in their name.

As for the outpouring of support the family has received, Jenn says she, her husband, Joe, son Damien, 13, and Alyssa are "overwhelmed."

“We appreciate so much all the support and all the love people are showing us,” she said. “It’s nice to be able to show our kids there are nice people out there that will help people when they are down.”

As for Jenn’s take on her daughter’s ambitious project, “she’s just got the biggest heart of any little girl I’ve ever known.”

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Alyssa De La Sala set up a lemonade stand then went on a local radio station to ask them to advertise her business. Little did she know, the station asked Tampa affiliate WFTS to also help. Alyssa and her family were shocked by the community's support.

"I am speechless, overwhelmed," Alyssa said. "It is amazing."

In her wildest dreams, Alyssa never imaged the crowd would be so large at her Lutz lemonade stand that officers would have to direct traffic.

A fire not only destroyed their home two years ago, but the family says a builder never completed the work, leaving them to pick up the pieces. Alyssa, heartbroken seeing her parents suffer, set up the lemonade stand to help rebuild her family's home.

"She took it upon herself to just want to do something to help mommy and daddy, I don't think she expected it to be anything like this either," said Jenn De La Sala, Alyssa's mother.

Her lemonade stand she set up with her brother Damien also featuring home-baked goods brought people from as far away as Hernando County. The family has been overwhelmed by the generosity of strangers. One person gave them \$500 and another gave \$1,000 - just for a cup of lemonade.

"Anything beyond what I thought would happen," said Joe De La Sala, Alyssa's father.

Not only did even strangers give, the first responders to the fire showed up in support. Deputies reached out to businesses and countless came through with boxes and boxes of supplies.

"We knew we had a good community, but when you just see everyone here it is really overwhelming," Jenn De La Sala said.

All this because of one little girl, whose motto "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade" really may have saved her family.

"We are very proud of her," Jenn De La Sala said.

"Thank you for your support, everything counts and helps us get home," Alyssa said.

Alyssa made almost \$15,000 for her family between a GoFundMe page and one day of lemonade sales.