

# Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - January 11, 2023



*All of us at Communities Connected for Kids hope you had a wonderful, peaceful holiday season and a happy New Year! Here's hoping for a great 2023, full of good health, strong families and love to share.*

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## Okeechobee & Treasure Coast Lead the State in Performance

**By Christina Kaiser** - As the state's network of child-welfare providers raced to the start of a new year, the system of care serving Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast made it to the 2022 finish line in the lead.

Judicial Circuit 19 was the best-performing area in the state for child safety, permanency and well-being as reported last month in the state's Accountability Report on the Health of Florida's Child Welfare System.

The report, compiled for the first time this year, is a comprehensive look at the performance of child-welfare systems within the state's 20 judicial circuits.

It measures the performance of Communities Connected for Kids, as well as investigations and child legal services, both overseen by DCF, and is a reflection of local partnerships. For example, the Guardian ad Litem program has made significant contributions to circuit outcomes, CCKids CEO Carol Deloach said.

Our community's overall ranking is 3.6 out of 5, with the next best-performing circuit receiving a total score of 3.2. Additionally, ours was the only circuit to score in the 'exceeds expectations' category.

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## Calling All Helpers: Come to the Expo for a New Awareness of Local Prevention Services



Navigating the many programs, services and organizations that are part of the local child-welfare and human services community can be daunting even to the professionals who work in it.

But Communities Connected for Kids is trying to make the journey a little easier for everyone by hosting a resource fair.

The Community Connections Expo, with a special focus on prevention – is scheduled

from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. February, 16, at 1860 SW Fountainview Blvd.

With two floors of booths, a narcan training and mindfulness sessions, organizers expect more than 200 people to attend the event.

"We hope this event will help educate and connect community providers - those who work with families daily but who may not be aware of certain available resources," said Melanie Baculima, event coordinator and CCKids behavioral health supervisor. "It also allows those same providers to connect faces to names as we all are working together to ensure the safety and well-being of our families."

Early reports show tremendous interest in the event.

In fact, an early call for booth vendors was met with such an overwhelming response that organizers were forced to close the public sign-up and focus strictly on programs providing prevention services and resources.

And with more than a month to go, more than 100 people have already registered to attend the event. Secure your spot now - register to attend by clicking the button:

[Register Here!](#)

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## CCKids Names First GEMs of 2023



Communities Connected for Kids congratulates Ronnisha Hall and Doreen Hernandez for winning this quarter's Going the Extra Mile – or GEM – Award.

Hall and Hernandez won the award, an honor given to staff and caregivers for excellence in service to children and families in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast, for the period spanning October through December.

Hernandez, a case-management support worker, received her GEM award in the Ruby Division, which recognizes the work of administrative and program staff. She was nominated by fellow support worker, Morgan Hoffman.

“Doreen is always the first one called after hours for emergencies, always volunteers to help despite her already full schedule and will drop anything to work all night, with no notice, even on holidays,” said Hoffman. “So many people rely on her so heavily; her heart is fully in the job, and she treats families with so much respect and is the greatest with kids of all ages.”

Hall, a case manager supervisor in St. Lucie County, received the award in the Emerald Division, which covers case-management staff.

“Ronnisha continues to go above and beyond for her team,” said Kelsey Hudek, one of Hall’s case managers. “She has been a pillar of support for the case managers in her unit.

She will continually check in with her team and encourage appropriate work-life balance as well as mental health and physical well-being.”

Hall is the sixth case management supervisor to be recognized with the award since it was introduced in 2018.

CCKids places a premium on supervisor training, and this latest example of exemplary work and dedication to staff is the result, said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for the organization.



“We had zero turnover among our case-management supervisors in 2022, and that’s an important piece to retaining case managers,” Kaiser said.

CCKids’ Board of Directors will recognize Hall and Hernandez during its January Board meeting. Each employee will receive a \$100 bonus and a plaque.

We are happy to take nominations from the community. If you know a CCKids employee who has gone above and beyond, let us know. Click the [link to the nomination form](#).

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## Kindness Comes Calling - With Underwear!

The Kindness Couture paid a visit to the Treasure Coast recently, bringing boxes of new socks, underwear and bras for children in care.

Pictured, from left, are CCKids Resource Coordinator Jordan Bebout, Addison Bethel and Kindness Couture founder Lola McClure.

Lola is Miss Treasure Coast with the Miss America organization. She competed and won the title in 2022. Each titleholder with Miss America is asked to mentor a “princess”. Addison is Lola’s princess, who she teaches about community service and giving back.

Although Lola lives in Broward County, where she founded Kindness Couture, she really wanted to help kids along the Treasure Coast, where she won her crown.

*Communities Connected for Kids is a community-based lead agency contracted by the Florida Department of Children and Families.*

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