



Connections - July 6, 2023

*A Community Newsletter for Supporters,
Stakeholders & Caregivers*



Caregivers and children had the opportunity to spend some time with other caregiver families during the June 24 Foster Family Pizza & Pool Party. The local foster-care community has been hosting the event in various forms for the past 20 years.

Even in Fun, Foster Parents Show They Don't Give Up When the Storm Comes

Stuart – Children frolicking about in the water features of Stuart's Sailfish Splash barely noticed the rain Saturday. Some even thought it added to the fun.

“We’re getting wet anyway,” said one youngster, playing water tag and trying to miss the flood of water about to spill onto his head from the facility’s mail feature – a pirate ship with a giant, dipping bucket of water.

Lightning interrupted the event, but not before the estimated 250 children and caregivers had a chance to swim, slide, splash and enjoy a slice or two of pie at CCKids’ 2023 Foster Family Pizza and Pool Party. CCKids, the organization responsible for the child-welfare system in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast, hosts the event every summer to celebrate its local caregivers.

“It was an honor to set aside one day to literally serve our families for everything they do for us and our children,” said Jerra Wisecup, CCKids licensing and caregiver support specialist. “I loved seeing the smiles and hear the laughter and chatter as families reconnected with one another.” Wisecup said she thought caregivers would leave the park at the first sign of inclement weather. Instead, she said, they headed for various alcoves and awnings to wait out the passing storm.

“I should have known, because it’s reflective of what they do for our kiddos every day,” she said. “They don’t give up when things get tough—they remain consistent and optimistic until the storm passes.”



Help Needed for 2024 Event

Communities Connected for Kids is looking for sponsors to help underwrite next year's caregiver appreciation event.

"We are trying to make this a more sustainable event, and we think it's one that the community could have fun supporting," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids' community relations director.

Sponsorship opportunities for the 2024 Foster Family Pizza & Pool Party are being developed now. If you are interested in learning more, please email Kaiser.

Caregiver News & Information

We are introducing a newsletter segment designed with our local caregivers in mind. If you are a CCKids caregiver, check here for news especially for you!

First Tee Offers Free Morning of Golf



[First Tee](#) uses the game of golf to teach life and social skills to 3.6 million children every year.

This summer, foster children and children served by the dependency system in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast will be counted among those numbers.

First Tee Treasure Coast will offer a morning of golf and fun beginning at 9 a.m., July 29, at Westside Campus of the Boys and Girls Clubs of St. Lucie County.

The event is being specially hosted for children in the dependency system in Indian

River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. Children of all ages and all skill levels are welcome. Click [here](#) to register today!

Hurricane Prep for Caregivers

**By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN
CCKids Nurse Care Coordinator**

Whether you are a seasoned Floridian or new to this area, storm preparation is essential, especially for caregivers who are responsible for the well-being of children in foster care.

Water, non-perishable food, baby supplies and medications should be on your hurricane supply list. You may also want to ask yourself this:

Do you have medications that require refrigeration, or is there medical equipment in your home that would require a generator to run if the power was out? Many children in care require special medical needs.

Is your gas tank filled in case you need to evacuate, and, if so, where would you go?

Caregivers have the additional requirement of making sure that their children's case managers know where and how to find them in the event of an evacuation.

What documents would you need to take with you if you evacuate? Again, caregivers have the additional task of keeping safe paperwork that identifies them as temporary guardians should the family end up in another part of the state.

Do you need to register for a space at one of the emergency or special-needs shelter? Many of these require advance registration.

To help you with your plans, here is a list of emergency shelter contacts and

registration sites that also include additional hurricane information:

Indian River County— (772) 226-3900

[Indian River County Emergency Management Division - VeroBeach.com](http://IndianRiverCountyEmergencyManagementDivision.com)

St Lucie County—(772) 462-8100

[Special Needs Program | St. Lucie County, FL \(stlucieco.gov\)](http://SpecialNeedsProgram|St.LucieCounty,FL(stlucieco.gov))

Martin County- (772) 287-1652

[Emergency Shelters | Martin County Florida](http://EmergencyShelters|MartinCountyFlorida)

Okeechobee Count - (863) 763-3212

[Okeechobee County Shelter List | Okeechobee County Florida Board of County Commissioners](http://OkeechobeeCountyShelterList|OkeechobeeCountyFloridaBoardofCountyCommissioners)

[Hurricanes | Ready.gov](http://Hurricanes|Ready.gov)

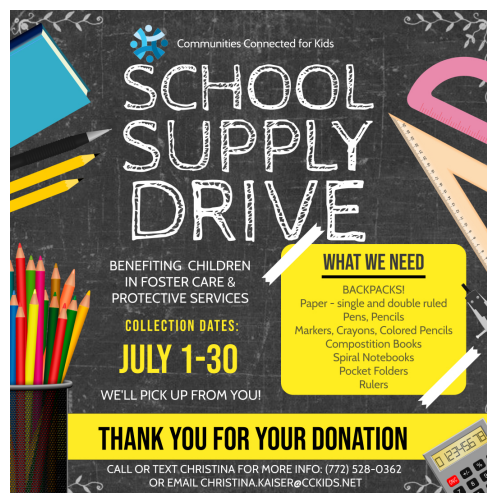
[Hurricanes | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(noaa.gov\)](http://Hurricanes|NationalOceanicandAtmosphericAdministration(noaa.gov))

[Weather Wiz Kids weather information for kids](http://WeatherWizKidsweatherinformationforkids)

Summer Just Started. That Means it's Back to School Time for CCKids!

CCKids is hosting a school supplies drive for children throughout Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast - the first such drive the local dependency system has undertaken in more than a decade.

If your business or group would like to adopt a number of children and collect backpacks of supplies for them, please click this [link](#). Once we receive your information, our outreach team will reach out to you.



The drive will work similarly to CCKids' long-successful holiday collection which depends on a network of smaller collections. For example, a local business might organize a drive and then collect supplies from its employees. CCKids will arrange a pick up time and collect from you.

The school supplies drive, which CCKids staff expect to develop gradually over the next several years, will supplement its partnership with the United Way of St. Lucie County, which has provided hundreds of bags to the local foster care community for more than 23 years.

"We have such a large community, and the number of children coming into care is increasing," CCKids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said. "We think it's prudent to begin developing other sources for school supplies and take some burden off the United Way."

During this Month of Independence, Let's Shift Our Focus to Collaboration and Cooperation



By Elizabeth Wynter, Guest Columnist

Growing up is a challenging journey for any young person, but the path can be even more arduous for those in foster care. Despite our nation's value on independence, research and experience indicate that the expectation of self-sufficiency for young people who age out of the foster care system is a myth at best and unhealthy at worst.

No one can flourish in isolation. Therefore, we need to shift our focus from self-sufficiency to interdependence. We must recognize that we are all connected and that collaboration and cooperation are fundamental to personal success. Teaching interdependence to young people in foster care will not only help them develop essential life skills but also instill a sense of belonging and build their self-esteem.

Trust and connection are the foundation of fostering interdependence. Young people in foster care often experience multiple transitions, making it challenging for them to build meaningful relationships. Foster parents, caregivers, and support staff must prioritize creating a safe and nurturing environment, allowing youth to establish trust and form healthy connections.

Elizabeth Wynter is the CEO of Florida's Selfless Love Foundation, a CCKids partner organization that helps match children with adoptive homes. The organization also powers the One Voice Impact, an initiative that provides former and current foster youth with opportunities to develop skills for life.

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