



Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - Aug. 23, 2023



Child-welfare professionals receive the last of this season's school supplies donations at CCKids' St. Lucie County Service Center, in Fort Pierce. The bags were distributed to children throughout the area by individual case managers during home visits. The drive for school supplies is ending, and that means one thing: Christmas! You heard it hear first, plans for our annual holiday toy drive will get under way in the next few weeks!

CCKids Adds Two More GEMS to It's Caregiver Crown

Port St. Lucie – When other doors close,
Rebecca Lurie's opens.



Lurie, a CCKids foster parent, reliably takes in children who have been declined by other providers or who may have been without a placement.

For that reason, she was one of two local caregivers recently honored with CCKids' Going the Extra Mile - or GEM - Award.

"I will say that it definitely takes a village, and I am just one of the many people in that village," said Lurie, who has been a foster parent in Fort Pierce for 12 years.

Jocelyne Fimiano, of Port St. Lucie, also received the award; she was recognized for her dedicated work with the families of children who come into her care.

The award is one of a series of accolades honoring various members of the local child-welfare community. Fimiano and Lurie were recognized in the Topaz category, which honors foster parents in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

"Rebecca Lurie opens her home to youth who come with severe trauma and needs," CCKids' placement team wrote of the caregiver. "When children leave her home, they voice feeling welcomed and cared for."

And Fimiano is an example of partnership parenting, said Kristine Maldonado, who nominated the Port St. Lucie foster parent from Camelot Community Care, one of CCKids' partner agencies.

"Jocelyne is an incredible foster parent with a huge heart," Maldonado said. "She and another foster parent recently helped a biological mom get furniture to furnish her home so she could reunify with her children."

She steps up to take a placements in the middle of the night, engages her fellow foster parents in community activities and tries to build a supporting environment.

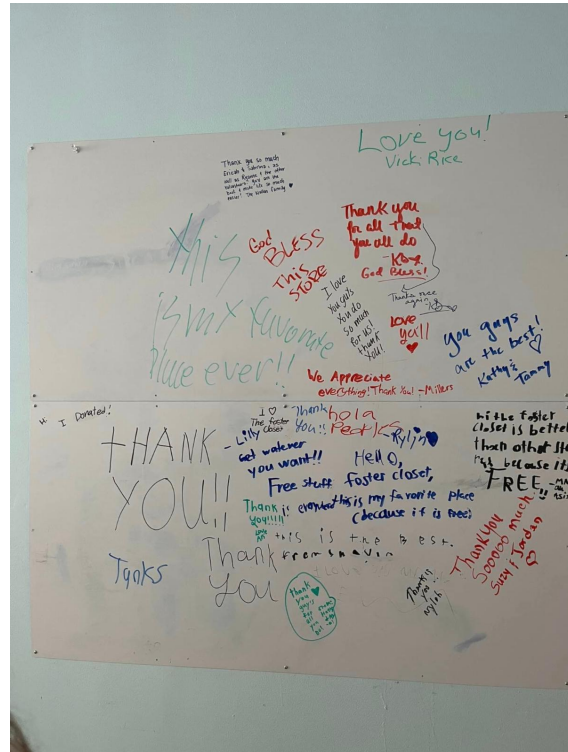
She is everything and more we could ask for in a foster parent, Maldonado said.

"There are so many deserving foster moms," Fimiano said. "My husband and kids are the reasons I am able to give so much - they pitch in and love on every kid that walks through the door."



Do you know a local caregiver who goes above and beyond and should be recognized? Let us know by submitting a nomination [here](#).

Interested in becoming a licensed foster parent? Call (772) 873-7800 and ask for Jerra to get started. You can also find more information about CCKids at CCKids.net.



Foster Closet Closes After Six Years



The Treasure Coast Foster Closet closed its doors this month after six years of accepting donations from the community and making them available to local caregivers. Founder Erica Brinson says it's a move financially necessitated but only temporary. Below are her thoughts on closing the beloved resource:

We are officially moved out of the Foster Closet, and it has me all up in my feels. Six years. For six years, this has been our home.

If I had to guess, I'd say this space has served thousands of children in that time. This space has seen tears, laughter, and joy from kids who are going through a really rough time, many of them getting to pick out their own stuff for the first time in their lives.

Countless friendships formed among foster parents and their children who met in the store. It's been such a special place for the families to come, get items they need, and fellowship with other families who understand their

unique journey. One of the neatest things has been knowing that these children get to meet others that are going through similar things. It's been a safe space for them to play, shop and socialize without fear of judgement.

That's what this has always been about. Connection: Connection not only between the families, but between those families and our beautiful, generous community. For so many of them, knowing they are thought of and supported is just as important as the tangible items they receive.

Seeing this space empty is super emotional. We've poured our lives into it. We've seen the community step up in a million ways. And although things are uncertain right now about what our next move is, one thing is certain: I'm not done. I'm not ready to give it all up. So, I'll let this empty space serve as a reminder that six years ago, this empty space was a new beginning.

Today, I'm choosing to believe that it still symbolizes that same new beginning.

My friend Jess reminded me this morning, "It's sad that this chapter is ending, but it's not the end of the book! Better things to come!"

I will hold on to that and trust that the Lord has a plan for us in store, and it'll be better than we imagined!

Thank you to every volunteer, donor, encourager, and foster family who has made the last six years such a success. It's been an honor to serve the community in this way. We appreciate all the support, and ask that you keep us in your prayers that we can find a suitable place to reopen, and for financial favor to make it all happen.

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