



Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - Feb. 7, 2024

It's Black History Month - Follow Us on [Facebook](#) as We Celebrate the Contributions of the African American Community.



Jocelyne Fimiano and her children Enzo, Gavin, Penelope and baby Charlotte were invited to a the Foster Family Zoo Tampa Event, a statewide recognition of outstanding foster families. She was joined by two other caregiver families, the Allison Hamilton and Mig McDonald families.

Heavy is the Crown? When Responsibility is Shared, it doesn't weigh. It Shines

Port St. Lucie – Sometimes, it's impossible to choose just one.

That was the case for Communities Connected for Kids when it came time to announce its most recent GEM – Going the Extra Mile – award to the foster parent who made the greatest impact over the last six months.

So four were named – one for the most recent quarter and a team of three foster parents whose contribution last summer resulted in a sibling group of seven children being reunited with their family.

Katherine McPherson, a foster parent in Vero Beach, received the award for the period spanning October through December.

“Ms. McPherson has gone far and beyond for children in her care,” said Cori Degroat, a dependency case manager who was herself a recent GEM recipient for her excellence as a case manager. “She took in one teenager who needed licensed care, while the sibling entered relative care.

“When the sibling’s placement disrupted, Ms. McPherson accepted the sibling in with no questions asked to ensure they remained together.”

The siblings grew up in an environment where they often found themselves caring for one another. Now, safe in McPherson’s home, Degroat said both children see their caregiver as someone they can rely on and go to for support.

“She has provided love and care for these children that allows them to be kids, while at the same time shaping them into young adults,” Degroat said.

Allison Hamilton, Jocelyn Fimiano and Mig McDonald also were recognized for their work in keeping siblings together.

The trio has been lauded multiple times for their teamwork. In fact, they will be featured in an upcoming segment of Forever Family, a news segment that highlights children in the local community of care and the caregivers who care for them.

Each of the foster parents cared for a different member of a large group of brothers and sisters. They invited one another to birthday parties and outings and worked together to make sure the children could return to a safe home. Their hard work paid off, and the children are now together at home.

Recently, the team was honored statewide and invited to attend a

recognition ceremony at the Tampa Zoo – an invitation they accepted together.

“Their work is a living example of what can be accomplished for children when our caregivers and biological families work together,” said Jerra Wisecup, CCKids licensing and caregiver support specialist.

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

Do you know a local caregiver who goes above and beyond and should be recognized? Let us know by submitting a nomination on the cckids.net site.

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.



Our foster families have been very busy this winter. While at the Zoo Tampa Event, a statewide celebration of outstanding foster families, the Hamiltons, McPhersons and Fimianos were interviewed and recorded as part of statewide educational and recruitment project.

They have also been interviewed by the Forever Family news program, and their individual segments will begin airing on News Channel 12 in March.

QPI Project Tries to Map First 60 Days for Easier Navigation

Port St. Lucie – The state's Quality Parenting Initiative - a network of five organizations working to improve relationships between caregivers and the child welfare community - is turning its attention to

the first 60 days a child is in care.

"It's a big, complex system, and we're trying to make sure no one gets lost in it," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director.

That begins with a road map of sorts that will outline the various steps families can expect when a child enters the dependency system.

Although some of that already exists on different websites and in different forms, the QPI project will pull all information into a single publication. Furthermore, it will be created in a sort of single timeline that will address the expectations and requirements of all parties, whether that's mom who has just had her child removed from home, or a foster parent who is now caring for that child.

QPI staff, which includes QPI sites from the state of Florida, including our own CCKids QPI Steering Committee, are surveying caregivers and parents now to find out what they wished they had known in those first 60 days. That information will drive the project, which is expected to reach its final destination by June.

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