



Connections - May 8, 2024



## #25by2025 Kicks Off With a Stroll

**Port St. Lucie** - Communities Connected for Kids launched a community-wide foster-home recruitment campaign Saturday at its Third Annual 1K for Kids and Story Stroll.

Called #25by2025, the campaign's goal is to recruit and license a minimum of 25 foster homes by January 1, 2025 - homes that will help reverse a downward trend in the number of foster homes being licensed since the COVID pandemic.

Since 2020, the community has experienced a 58 percent decrease in homes in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast, said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director.

"We have many wonderful homes and nurturing caregivers, but it's not enough to keep up with the number of children coming into care or the number of homes closing," said Kaiser, adding that many caregivers close their homes after adopting or for related family reasons.

"We have too many children and teens in group care or placed in other parts of the state," she said. "Twenty five new homes will be enough to start bringing them home."

A more robust foster-home community also makes it possible to keep siblings together and to keep children closer to their communities and schools while in foster care.

The #25by2025 campaign offers the community many opportunities to get involved in advocating for and recruiting homes, Kaiser said.

"We created a list of 25 ways to help – from sharing campaign information on social media to selecting foster-care themes for Book Club," she said "Some of it might seem small, but one small act can make a huge difference—one connection can change the life of a child."

That was the message Saturday morning at Port St. Lucie's Hillmoor Lake Park, where CCKids launched the campaign as part of its 1K for Kids & Story Stroll.

Nearly 200 people registered for the event, which included a 1K interactive trail where walkers could use QR codes to learn more about the foster-care community.

Also at the event were several foster-parent licensing agencies and a series of celebration stations where participants could join the #ManicureMovement to raise awareness for the prevention of child abuse or record a 3-second video to celebrate families being reunified this summer.

Walkers also had the opportunity to join the Starfish Society, a special tier of giving for those who elevate their commitment to the #25by2025 campaign.

For a complete list of ways to help, or to join the campaign's Starfish Society, visit our campaign site at [cckids.net](http://cckids.net) and then click the #25by2025 banner.



*CCKids Board Chair Melanie Wiles paints faces during the 1K for Kids & Story Stroll.*



*All of our foster-parent recruitment and licensing agencies came out for the 1K, including Camelot Community Care, 4Kids of the Treasure Coast and Cayuga Centers. Each agency engaged with families and discussed steps to licensing. Other booths at the event included those for child-abuse awareness and the new Starfish Society.*



*Code Red Roofers was one of our 1K shirt sponsors! They came out for the morning, as did our new friends at Ability Tree (pictured right with CCKids Chief Executive Officer Carol Deloach and Licensing and Caregiver Support Program Director Jill Poole.*



*CCKids outreach team had the opportunity to take 3-second videos of supporters and event participants cheering on local families who are reunifying with their children. CCKids celebrates reunification every June by slicing these videos together into a single "moment of cheer" and then posting on Facebook. Pictured are the recruitment teams at Cayuga Centers and 4Kids of the Treasure Coast.*

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## Next Stop in Campaign Series of Events: Special Fatherhood Roundtable

**Fort Pierce** - There are many ways to get involved with CCKids' #25by2025 campaign to add 25 foster homes by January 1.

One of those ways is to attend at least one campaign event - virtually or in person - between now and the end of the year.

Your next opportunity is June 10.

Just in time for father's day, the next community event scheduled for #25by2025 is a roundtable discussion about being a foster parent and a dad.

The June 10th roundtable will be live-streamed on Facebook and composed of local foster fathers and representatives from the Healthy Start of Martin County's Fatherhood Initiative.

The fatherhood initiative is a program designed to maintain connections between children in care and their fathers.

The event will take place on Facebook; audience members will be able to ask questions of the panel through a moderator.

Look for more information in the weeks to come.

If you are a caregiver interested in being on the panel, please contact [Jerra Wisecup](#).

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### Private Pool Party Will Celebrate Caregivers

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month, and we're celebrating with a private pizza & pool party!

If you are a CCKids caregiver, be sure to register for the event, scheduled for May 11 at Sailfish Splash, in Stuart. Registration is now open through a link sent via email. Contact [Jerra](#) for more information.

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