



# Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - April 24, 2024



## IT ONLY TAKES ONE

ONE CONNECTION TO  
CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE.

*BE THE CONNECTION.  
BE A FOSTER PARENT.*



## Come for a Walk, Leave with a Mission

**Port St. Lucie** - Communities Connected for Kids will launch its #25by2025 foster-parent recruitment campaign this Saturday during the Third Annual 1K for Kids & Story Stroll.

The goal of the campaign is to add 25 foster homes by January 1, 2025 - a mission in which we encourage the entire community to join.

"We have a lot of activities lined up for the 1K," said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for Communities Connected for Kids, the organization that oversees the child-welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

Those activities include face-painting for children, an interactive story stroll around Port St. Lucie's Hillmoor Lake and a series of celebration stations where the community can learn how to get more involved.

For example, we have a station set up for anyone who wants to celebrate National Child Abuse Prevention Month by joining our #ManicureMovement, and another set up for those who want to help us celebrate the reunification of children with their families, Kaiser said.

"Best of all, our caregiver support staff will be there to celebrate our foster families and to unveil the campaign's Starfish Society," said Kaiser, adding that the society is a group of people who commit to a higher level of involvement.

It all starts Saturday, April 27, at Hillmoor Lake Park, in Port St. Lucie. Come anytime from 9 a.m. to noon. No registration is necessary. Our recruitment agencies - Camelot Community Care, 4Kids of the Treasure Coast and Cayuga Centers - will be on hand to talk to anyone interested in becoming foster parents.

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## Campaign Urges Community to Get Involved; We Have 25 Ways to Do It

**Fort Pierce** - There are many ways to get involved with CCKids' #25by2025 campaign - 25 at least.

The idea is to get families, educators, business owners - everyone in the community - to own this campaign in ways that seems small but that really have a collective impact, said Jerra Wisecup, CCKids licensing and caregiver support specialist.

"We want everyone talking about it, because that's how important it is," Wisecup said.

Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast currently is home to fewer than 85 foster homes, and more than 200 children who need them, she said.

"Without enough homes, we must place siblings in separate locations, place children out of the area or in group homes," Wisecup said. "Group care is

designed for children who need specialized services; most children heal best in homes within their local communities."

Campaign officials are counting on the community to help turn things around by offering 25 ways to get involved. Those 25 ways range from engaging on social media and choosing foster-care themes for book club to becoming a licensed foster parent.

A full listing is included below and includes a Starfish Society for anyone who commits to at least five "ways."

Ready to get involved? Want to be a founding member of the Starfish Society? It's easy - just scan the QR code in the flyer below or visit our campaign [portal](#). We'll send you a little gift for your membership.



## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to help us reach our goal of adding 25 new foster homes by January. Select a few from the list below, and call us for information on individual actions.

- Become a foster parent!
- Like and follow CCKids on FB & Instagram.
- Introduce foster care related titles to book club!
- Use campaign hashtags.
- Share campaign posts.
- Participate in #WearBlue days.
- Attend a campaign event.
- Invite friends to attend events.
- Display campaign information in shop windows.
- Display foster care messaging on marquees.
- Sponsor a campaign activity.
- Refer us to possible sponsors.
- Attend a Chamber meeting with staff.
- Print campaign flyers and hang on community boards, as in libraries.
- Use campaign Zoom backgrounds.
- Share your stories, pictures and videos.
- Talk about our campaign to friends.
- Cover the cost of a dinner out for a foster family.
- Join the Starfish Society.
- Add our campaign and our families to your monthly prayer list.
- Invite us to speak at your next PTO meeting.
- Write letters of encouragement to our local birth parents.
- Write thank you letters to our local foster parents.
- Offer discounts to local foster families.
- Participate or call in to a foster-care roundtable.



For more information or help getting involved in any of the listed "25 ways", call (772) 873-7800 and ask for Jerra Wisecup or Christina Kaiser, or scan the code for more information about our campaign.



## Starfish Tells an Important Lesson

**By Christina Kaiser**  
**Community Relations Director**

If you've been following the soft launch of our #25by2025 recruitment development campaign - a multi-year project that officially kicks off this

Saturday during CCKids' 1K for Kids & Story Stroll - you may have noticed a theme: The starfish.

We developed the campaign around starfish lore and imagery, specifically the story of a young child throwing starfish back into the ocean - a seemingly impossible and meaningless task to those witnessing the child's kindness.

In the story, an old man sees a child running up and down the beach, throwing back into the ocean some of the thousands of starfish that had washed ashore.

The child tells the puzzled man that he is saving the starfish, to which the man replies that there are thousands of starfish and only one of him.

"What difference can you make?" he asks.

We all know the story: The child picks up another starfish, throws it back into the ocean, turns to the man and says,

'I made a difference to that one.'

That's the point we're trying to make with our campaign. We need you to help us reach our goals, and it's not just glad-handing when we suggest you can make a difference by engaging with us on social media or by sharing our campaign posts.

In fact, the reason we call this a recruitment development campaign - emphasis on the word, 'development' - is because it will take all of us working together over an extended and ongoing period of time to create an environment rich enough to produce the number of foster homes needed to make our system of care truly nourishing for children.

That means having enough homes to keep siblings together during some of the most traumatic moments of their lives, keeping babies and young children out of group homes and ensuring that our older children - our teens - have loving homes to belong to while in foster care.

As we say in our campaign, it only takes one connection to change a child's life - one child rescuing one starfish at a time.

Consider the rest of the story. I like to think the old man bent over, picked up his own starfish and threw it back into the ocean. That's a 100 percent increase in impact - that's twice the individuals getting rescued!

What can an entire beach full of people do in the lives of those starfish? In the lives of children?

I encourage you all to find out with me.

Communities Connected for Kids | 549 NW Lake Whitney Pl. , Ste. 204, Port St. Lucie, FL  
34986

[Unsubscribe christina.kaiser@cckids.net](mailto:christina.kaiser@cckids.net)

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