



CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

February 19, 2026

Join Us This Saturday!!



FREE

Saturday Feb. 21
Pioneer Park, PSL
2454 SE Westmoreland
10am-1pm

Face Painting & Crafts

Pioneer Park Playground
& Botanical Gardens

Food Trucks
(for purchase)



SCAN TO REGISTER

CCKids 5th Annual 1K for Kids & Story Stroll

This fun, family-friendly event raises awareness for our local foster care community and the need for more loving foster homes.

Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the botanical gardens with interactive story boards highlighting real foster families.

Stop by our celebration stations to learn more about our community of care, ask questions, & explore about becoming a foster parent.



The 2025 CCKids 1K for Kids & Story Stroll is happening Saturday, February 21 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the beautiful Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens and Pioneer Park!

We can't wait to see you for this special, family-friendly event celebrating local foster families and raising awareness for children in care.

Enjoy a scenic 1K stroll through the gardens, winding past succulent plantings, hanging orchids, and the butterfly garden. Along the way, powerful stories from children and families in our foster care community will come to life through interactive QR codes.

A heartfelt thank you to our generous event sponsors Sunshine Health, Cohen Milstein, Tammy Eiseman KW All In The Family Realty, and The DeBerard Family Foundation for making this event possible and for supporting local children and foster families.

Whether you're walking, supporting, or simply coming to learn more, your presence makes a difference. Recruitment specialists will be available for anyone interested in becoming a foster parent, and our celebration stations will share meaningful ways you can support children and families — even if fostering isn't the right fit for you.

Enjoy facepainting by Amanda Forst and fun kid's crafts! Lee Lee's Ice and another foodtruck will be there for food purchases as well.

There's still time to register — or simply come out and join us! We look forward to celebrating with you Saturday and showing our community's heart for kids.

REGISTER HERE



Making Christmas Bright: Thank You to Our Incredible Sponsors

Communities Connected for Kids and Guardians for New Futures are incredibly thankful for the generous sponsors of our annual Making Christmas Bright campaign. Through this special initiative, every child in foster care across Indian River, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, and Martin counties has their holiday wish list fulfilled.

This effort is a tremendous undertaking each year, and it simply would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of

each and every sponsor who steps forward to help.

Because of you, children in our community experience the joy, excitement, and magic of the holiday season. We extend our deepest gratitude for making Christmas truly

bright for the children and families we serve.



Lavender Life Company and Guardians For New Futures partnered to donate 600 Xander Friends to Communities Connected for Kids!

Vic and Vickie from Lavender Life Company personally drove the lavender sachets and the most beautiful stuffed bunnies and puppies all the way from their lavender farm in Michigan to Port St. Lucie. Once here, the amazing team at Guardians For New Futures stepped in to lovingly assemble each stuffed animal with its calming lavender sachet — and the scent is absolutely divine! These special lavender Xander Friends will be given to children entering foster care, offering them a comforting buddy during a time of transition and uncertainty. A soft friend to hold and a calming scent to breathe in can make such a meaningful difference.

Communities Connected for Kids is beyond grateful for the generosity, heart, and collaboration of Lavender Life and Guardians for New Futures. Thank you for helping us bring comfort and care to the children we serve.



CCKids Travels to Tallahassee for Rally in Tally

CCKids team members Caryn Toole, Cheri Sheffer, Lauren Hahn, Josie Kirchner, and Katie Vella recently traveled to Tallahassee to participate in Rally in Tally, helping kick off the Florida Legislative Session and advocate for the children and families we serve.

During the visit, our team had the opportunity to meet with Senator Gayle Harrell, Representative Dana Trabulsky, and Senator Erin Grall to discuss the needs of children in foster care and the importance of continued legislative support for child welfare services.

We are grateful for the time and attention these leaders gave to the critical issues impacting vulnerable children across our region. Advocacy is a vital part of our mission, and we remain committed to ensuring the voices of the children and families we serve are heard at the state level.

The PGA KnitWits Wrap Our Foster Children in Love

CCKids had an absolutely wonderful time with the PGA KnitWits during their annual Community Baby Shower! Each year, this incredibly generous group comes together to collect diapers, clothing, and essential resources to support the children and families we serve. They also lovingly knit beautiful blankets and hats, providing not just warmth, but comfort and care to little ones in our community.

Members of our team had the opportunity to connect with these amazing women, share more about child welfare, and answer thoughtful questions about foster care in our community.

We are so grateful for partners like the PGA KnitWits who continue to wrap our families in love — literally and figuratively!



A U-Haul Full of Hope from Coastal Life Church

We are incredibly grateful to Coastal Life Church of Palm City for their extraordinary generosity and heart for children in foster care. When we were unable to secure certain sizes of diapers, pull-ups, and wipes, their team stepped in without hesitation—providing such an overwhelming donation that it required a U-Haul to transport it all!

Because of their kindness, children and caregivers across our community now have immediate access to essential items that offer comfort, dignity, and stability during times of transition. This is what true community support looks like—showing up when it matters most.



CHIPP Bags Bring Relief to Food Insecure Kids in our Community

Dr. Shardae Tripp and the incredible volunteers of the Psi Pi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority generously donated CHIPP (Childhood Hunger Initiative Power Pack) bags to our St. Lucie County Service Center.

These CHIPP bags—filled with nutritious, non-perishable food—help ensure that children have access to meals even when school is not in session. Through this

program, Alpha Alpha Alpha volunteers pack and distribute food bags that support students during weekends and school breaks, reducing food insecurity for families who need it most.

Dr. Tripp and her dedicated team exemplify what community partnership truly looks like, and we are so grateful for their continued compassion and commitment to children and families on the Treasure Coast.



Its My Very Own Bags

CCKids received an incredible donation of It's My Very Own Bags from Kaye & Joe and the wonderful team at Midport Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Each handmade bag is thoughtfully packed with comfort items and necessities for children entering care — many of whom have never had some of these things before. From diapers, toys, flashlights, stuffed animals, toothbrushes, brushes, and books to cozy quilts — these bags are truly filled to the brim with love. A heartfelt thank you to Midport Church for your generosity and for thinking of the children in care!



CCKids Denise Natalizio brings her Sourdough to WILD

We are so proud of CCKids Martin County Director Denise Natalizio for volunteering at Inner Truth Project's annual WILD charity event. Through her bakery, The Good Loaf Bakery, Denise led sourdough starter classes in support of this incredible organization and its mission. She was joined by Kristy Conway and Vanessa Barnes, members of the CCKids Board of Directors — a true example of leadership rooted in service and heart.

Thank you, Denise, for giving back to our community in such a meaningful and impactful way!

Supporting Children in Foster Care at the Hibiscus Children's Center Gala

Senator Gayle Harrell joined CCKids Community Relations Director Dana Anderwald at the annual gala benefiting Hibiscus Children's Center. The inspiring evening brought community leaders and advocates together to raise vital funds supporting children staying at the shelter. We are grateful to stand alongside dedicated partners who are committed to ensuring vulnerable children in our community receive the care, safety, and support they deserve.



Supporting the Samaritan Center of Vero

Caryn Toole, IRC County Director for CCKids, joined Ellen Wayne, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach, at the 30th Annual Soup Bowl benefiting the Samaritan Center.

The Soup Bowl is a beloved community tradition, with donated soup served at 22 locations across the county to raise critical funds for the Samaritan Center — a homeless shelter serving children and families in Vero Beach. Caryn proudly serves as Chairman of the Center's local Advisory Board and remains deeply

committed to supporting its mission.

We are grateful for community events like this that bring people together to make a meaningful difference for vulnerable children and families.

Blending Health & Fun

CCKids Martin County Director Denise Natalizio recently took part in a fun and energizing activity with House of Hope — hopping on the “Rock the Bike” to blend a smoothie by pedaling!

This interactive bike-powered blender is one of the creative ways House of Hope engages children in learning about exercise, nutrition, and healthy living. By turning physical activity into something hands-on (and delicious!), kids experience firsthand how movement fuels their bodies — and even their snacks.

We love partnering with organizations that make wellness fun and memorable, helping the children and families we serve build healthy habits that can last a lifetime.



JOIN US MARCH 19 AT 6:30PM

Let's Talk!
**PARENT
COUNCIL**



Communities
Connected
for Kids

Partnering for Success

Connect with other parents and share your experiences. Your perspectives help us help others!

MONTHLY VIRTUAL MEETING

every 3rd Thursday

Jan 15, March 19, May 21 @ 6:30pm

Feb 19, April 16, June 18 @ Noon



SCAN HERE

Your participation
makes a difference!



CONTACT US 772-873-7800



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