



CONNECTIONS

A CCKids Community Newsletter

July 8, 2026

THE JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

In celebrating Independence Day, we often think about freedom, opportunity, and the ability to choose our own path. For the young adults we serve at Communities Connected for Kids, independence can mean something even more personal: earning a diploma, completing a college semester, receiving a certification, joining the military, or simply refusing to give up when the journey gets difficult.

For many youth and young adults with foster care experience, the road to independence is not always easy. Challenges that many young people never face can create additional obstacles to education, employment, and self-sufficiency. That's why every milestone—big or small—is worth celebrating.

We continually remind our young people that their effort matters more than perfection. High school and college are marathons, not sprints. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Most importantly, we encourage them to keep believing in themselves, even when the finish line feels far away.

This year, we have so much to celebrate.

INDEPENDENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- N. earned a 4.0 GPA this semester and maintains an overall GPA of 3.79.
- L. is graduating and beginning service in the United States Army.
- A. earned a 4.0 GPA, made the President's List, and will complete a bachelor's degree in December 2026.
- K. completed a Certified Nursing Assistant program and is now pursuing Licensed Practical Nurse certification
- K. successfully transferred to UCF and finished the semester with a 3.38 GPA.
- A. continues working toward a career as a Firefighter/EMT while maintaining steady academic progress.
- K. had a successful semester after being reinstated to PESS and continues making strong academic progress.
- P. continues making steady progress toward degree completion.
- I. earned Dean's List honors for two consecutive semesters, maintains a 3.8 GPA, and will graduate this summer before transferring to UCF.
- D. successfully completed a first semester in PESS and continues progressing toward educational goals.
- A. graduated from Valencia College with Associate in Science and Associate in Arts degrees in Paralegal Studies Litigation, earned a perfect 4.0 GPA, made the President's List, and will transfer to the UCF this fall.
- A. demonstrated perseverance by successfully completing another challenging semester.
- A. continues making progress toward HS graduation while advocating for youth through Florida Youth SHINE.
- D. is progressing toward graduation while serving as a local and statewide advocate through Florida Youth SHINE.



Not every success story looks the same—

For some, success is earning a 4.0 GPA. For others, it's completing a challenging semester, returning to school after setbacks, earning a certification, or taking the next step toward a long-term career goal. Independence is not defined by one path; it is defined by perseverance, growth, and the determination to keep moving forward.

These accomplishments also remind us that no one achieves success alone. Behind every milestone is a network of caring adults, educators, caregivers, mentors, case managers, specialists, and supporters who continue to encourage, guide, and believe in our youth. To all of those individuals—you are part of their success story too.

As we recognize Independence Day, we are proud to celebrate a different kind of independence: the courage to dream bigger, the resilience to overcome challenges, and the determination to create a brighter future.

To all of our young adults, congratulations on everything you have accomplished this year. Your achievements inspire us every day, and we can't wait to see what comes next. Because independence isn't just about standing on your own—it's about having the strength, support, and determination to build the future you deserve.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION, THE PROMISE OF INDEPENDENCE

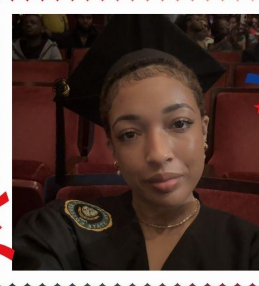


A.G. recently graduated from Valencia College with both an Associate in Science degree and an Associate in Arts degree in Paralegal Studies Litigation. His dedication and hard work earned him a perfect 4.0 GPA and recognition on the President's List.

This fall, A.G. will continue his educational journey at the University of Central Florida, taking the next step toward achieving his goals. While preparing for this exciting new chapter, he is spending the summer interning at a law office, gaining hands-on experience and valuable insight into the legal profession.

We are incredibly proud of A.G.'s accomplishments and look forward to all he will achieve in the future.

CELEBRATING A YOUNG MOTHER'S JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

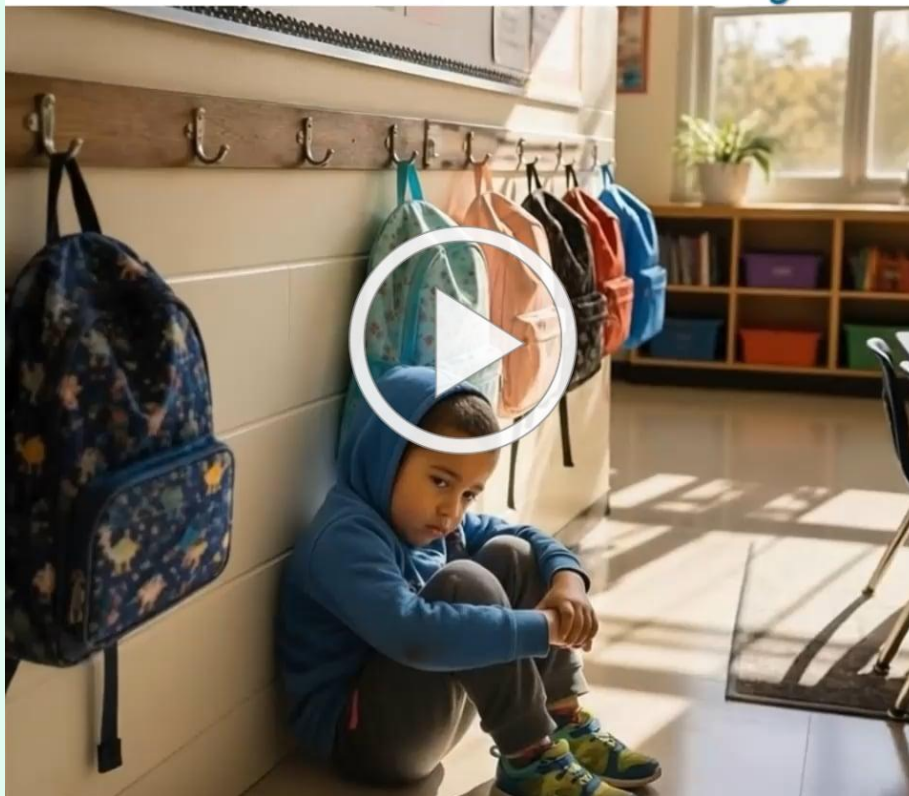


Y.M. recently graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in Health Science and is already looking ahead to her next goal: becoming a dentist. As a single mother, she balanced college, parenting, and the challenges of young adulthood while staying focused on her education and future. She plans to continue her studies this fall and pursue admission into a dental hygiene program in 2027.

For many young adults with foster care experience, the journey to independence comes with unique challenges. Y.M.'s success is a testament to the impact of resilience, determination, and support.

Congratulations, Y.M.! We're proud of all you've accomplished and excited to see where your journey takes you next!

Some local foster children will start school with almost nothing.



Help Fill More Than a Backpack

For children in foster care, a backpack can represent more than school supplies. It can provide confidence, stability, and a sense of belonging at the start of a new school year.

Take a moment to watch the video below, then consider helping us equip local children for a successful year ahead.



DONATE SCHOOL SUPPLIES HERE

In Case You Missed It....

Last month, our social media channels were filled with heartwarming moments of hope and healing. We're excited to share some of our recent reunification stories—powerful reminders of what can happen when families receive the support they need.

These inspiring successes highlight the resilience of parents, the strength of family bonds, and the life-changing impact of community support. Take a moment to celebrate these incredible journeys and see how lives are being transformed, one family at a time.

Check out the featured reunification stories below!

FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



This mother never stopped showing up for her daughters. She completed parenting classes, stayed drug-free, and kept a strong bond while they lived with their grandmother. With the support of her family and service providers, she addressed every concern—and the day finally came when they could be together again.



FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



After early struggles with sobriety and engagement, these parents made meaningful, lasting changes through dedication and support. Now three months into reunification, they are thriving with their children.



FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



This past year, a mother worked hard toward reunification—completing a substance abuse program, maintaining her recovery, and securing full-time work in nursing. She is excited to reunify with her two children this month!



FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



This father was always actively involved and simply needed additional support. He quickly engaged in services, demonstrated meaningful behavior change, and worked tirelessly toward reunification. He has shared that his priority is ensuring his children never experience trauma again.



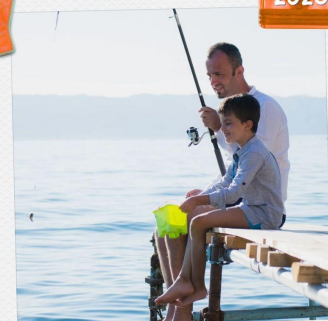
FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



After experiencing a removal following a relapse, this mother remained determined to make reunification successful. She created a new plan to maintain her sobriety and is now working toward becoming a sponsor to inspire and support others on their recovery journey.



FAMILY REUNIFICATION MONTH



This father and son are being reunified after a long journey. While the father was incarcerated during the case, he immediately engaged in services upon his release. Through dedication and progress, the family is now celebrating reunification and beginning their next chapter together.



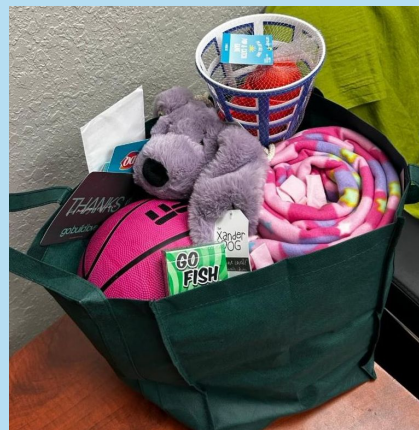
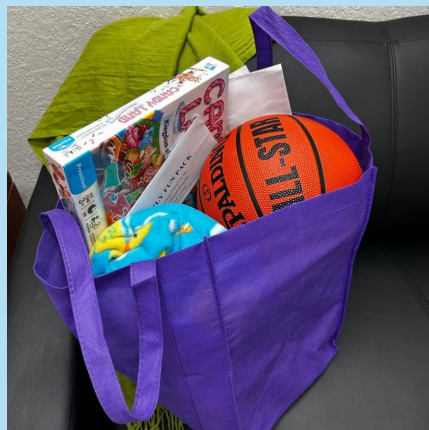
Welcome Home Kits: Celebrating New Beginnings

We're celebrating a beautiful collaboration that's helping reunified families begin their next chapter with joy, connection, and hope.

The Welcome Home Kit initiative grew from an idea developed by the CCKids Quality Parenting Team and came to life through the generosity and partnership of Michelle Heath of Go Build Love, Tim Geil of CarePortal, and the incredible students of Jupiter Christian School. Additional donations from Blessing Blankets, Xander lavender-stuffed animals, and G.A.L. helped make these special kits even more meaningful.

Presented to families as they reunify, each kit is thoughtfully filled with items that encourage bonding and create lasting memories together—from board and card games to sports balls, crafts, passes to local family attractions, and gift certificates for shared meals.

Together, we're reminding families that reunification isn't just a moment—it's a new beginning. These Welcome Home Kits help families reconnect, celebrate, and create joyful memories as they begin the next chapter of their journey.



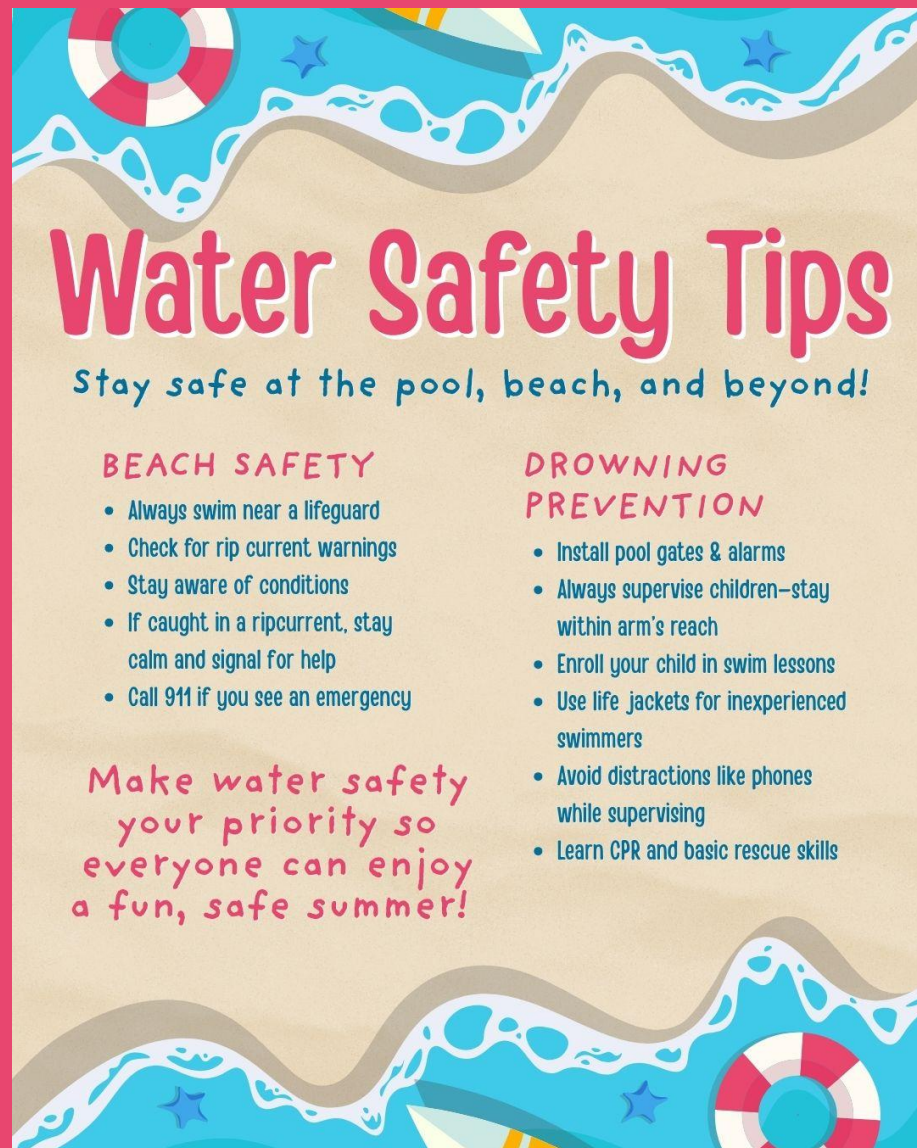
Free Summer Meals for Florida Kids

Summer BreakSpot is offering free, healthy meals to all Florida children and teens 18 and under throughout the summer. No registration or paperwork is required—just show up and eat.

Families can find nearby meal sites by visiting SummerBreakSpot.org and using the site locator to search by address, city, or ZIP code. Locations include schools, parks, libraries, and community centers.

Help ensure every child has access to nutritious meals this summer by sharing this resource with families in your community.

SEARCH HERE



PLEASE CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

STOP DROWNING NOW WEBSITE

FREE SWIM LESSON OPTIONS

SLC LESSONS (FINANCIAL AID AVAIL)

REQUEST FREE POOL ALARMS

BEACH SAFETY WITH MARTIN COUNTY FIRE RESCUE VIDEO

DROWING PREVENTION WITH MARTIN COUNTY FIRE RESCUE VIDEO



Greetings Adoptive Parents,

My name is Shearon Demps, and I am the Post Adoption Specialist for Communities Connected for Kids. I provide support to adoptive families across the Treasure Coast and Okeechobee.

A Post Adoption section will be featured in the CCK monthly newsletter, offering resources, tips, and helpful information for families. I can be reached at 772-475-8159 or via email at shearon.demps@cckids.net.

Adoption is a lifelong journey that involves every member of the family. The Post Adoption Support Group is designed to help families navigate the “normative crises” that often arise throughout the adoption experience. These challenges are commonly connected to core adoption issues, such as experiences of loss, memories of biological family, and post-traumatic symptoms in adoptive children. The group is facilitated by adoption-competent therapists from Residing Hope.

Post Adoption Support Groups are held virtually via Zoom on the first Monday of each month. To learn more or submit a referral, visit <https://residinghope.org/> or contact the main office at 386-259-5413. This service is provided at no cost.

Call 211 if you need immediate help. It is a free and confidential service that connects you to expert, caring help for various needs, such as housing, food, health, and mental health.

Summer Online Training Sessions

Devereux will be offering two trainings to strengthen your skills in supporting youth this summer! These sessions are offered at no cost via Microsoft Teams.

Our Behavior Support Program will be presenting **Behavior Compliance**: Gain awareness of online exploitation, sextortion and learn to identify concerns and risks that can occur online. 2 sessions - July 7th and July 20th.

Our Delta team will be presenting **Internet Safety Part 1: Protecting Youth Online**: Gain crucial insights into recognizing, preventing, and responding to risks that vulnerable youth face. 2 sessions - July 14th and July 24th

Please scan the QR code below of the session you would like to attend to register.



Behavior Compliance Training



A VIRTUAL WORKSHOP | TUESDAY JULY 7TH | 6PM

Learn effective techniques to use compliance strategies at home. The basics of compliance training will build behavior momentum and encourage cooperation.

Register by Scanning the QR code



Behavior Compliance Training



A VIRTUAL WORKSHOP | MONDAY JULY 20TH | 12PM

Learn effective techniques to use compliance strategies at home. The basics of compliance training will build behavior momentum and encourage cooperation.

Register by Scanning the QR code

DEVEREUX FLORIDA'S PARENT AND
CAREGIVER EDUCATION SERIES

INTERNET SAFETY PART 1: PROTECTING YOUTH ONLINE

Join us to learn about supporting caregivers in identifying concerns and risks that can occur online. Provides resources and tips for guidelines and conversations. Assists caregivers in increasing awareness of online exploitation, sextortion, and more.

Learn steps that you can take to help protect your child. The risk of sexual exploitation is a part of the discussion.

**Tuesday, July 14th
6:00pm**

RSVP by
Scanning the QR code below



Devereux | FL



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**Friday, July 24th
12:00pm**

RSVP by
Scanning the QR code below



Devereux | FL



Ky, Age 15

Say hi to Ky! She is a bright and passionate young individual with a love for cooking, often finding joy in trying new recipes and expressing creativity in the kitchen. She also has a deep appreciation for nature and enjoys spending time outdoors. Ky has a growing interest in fashion, using it to showcase her personality and style.

Ky is looking for a supportive and caring forever family who will encourage her growth, celebrate her individuality, and help her unlock her full potential. If you're ready to build meaningful connections and create lasting memories, you just might be the perfect match for Ky.

Interested in learning about adoption?
Please contact Children's Home Society
at tcadoptions@chsfl.org

ADOPTABLE
CHILD
SPOTLIGHT



QPI MONTHLY WEBINAR SERIES:

YOUTH VOICE LEADS THE WAY:

Reimagining Transitions

for Teens in Care

July 16, 2026

2:00 pm Eastern | 1:00 pm Central |
12:00 pm Mountain | 11:00 am Pacific

REGISTER HERE

JOIN US JULY 16 AT 12 NOON

Let's Talk!

PARENT COUNCIL

Partnering for Success

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

MONTHLY VIRTUAL MEETING

every 3rd Thursday @ Noon

July 16	Aug 20	Sept 17
Oct 15	Nov 19	Dec 17



Your participation
makes a difference!

CONTACT US

772-873-7800
<https://cckids.net>



Communities
Connected
for Kids



[CLICK HERE TO JOIN THE MEETING](#)



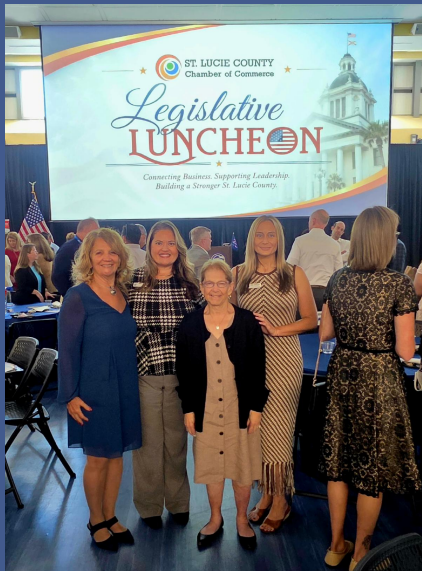
lisa.mcbride@cckids.net

Sunshine Health Orthodontia Grant

Sunshine Health will open the next Orthodontia Grant on August 1. The grant will be open from Aug 1-31 with the eligibility criteria of being active on the Sunshine CWSP-Child Welfare Specialty Plan—now being called the Pathway to Shine Plan.

Summer is a great time for kids with orthodontia referrals to have their evaluations done!

Any questions can sent to Lisa McBride at:



CCKids Team Attends Legislative Luncheon

CCKids Board Member Vanessa Farnes, St. Lucie County Director Katie Valla, CEO Carol Deloach, and Community Relations Director Dana Anderwald recently attended the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon.

During the event, Senator Gayle Harrell and Representative Toby Overdorf provided updates on newly passed legislation and discussed how upcoming laws taking effect across Florida may impact local communities. The luncheon offered an opportunity for community leaders to stay informed, engage in important conversations, and strengthen partnerships that support families and children throughout our region.

CCKids remains committed to staying connected with local and state leaders to advocate for the well-being of children and families in our community.

One Church, One Child

CCKids' Director of Permanency and Wellbeing Lesa Sims and Director of Community Relations Dana Anderwald attended the OneChurch OneChild Florida Prayer Breakfast at First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. Together with faith and community leaders, they explored how stronger partnerships between faith communities and child welfare agencies can better support children and families in our community.



***Blessing Blankets Bring
Comfort & Hope***



Communities Connected for Kids extends its sincere thanks to the Palm City chapter of Blessing Blankets Made with Love for its generous donation of handmade blankets. These special blankets will be included in reunification welcome home kits for families rebuilding connections and in regulation bags that provide comfort to children during times of crisis. Your kindness is helping bring warmth, reassurance, and a sense of security to children and families throughout our community.

Indian River County Healthy Start

Indian River County Director Caryn Toole attended the IRC Healthy Start Coalition Annual Meeting, here with Healthy Start CEO Megan McFall and United Way of IRC CEO Meredith Egan.



amazon
wishlist
Please click here to donate items
needed for the children in care



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

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