

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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## News & Media

### #25by25 Campaign to Kick Off During April Breakfast

Devereux Community Based Care this spring will launch a community-wide public relations campaign focusing on the area's need for more foster homes.

Called #25by25, the campaign's goal is to recruit and license a minimum of 25 foster homes by December 25 - homes that will provide safe harbor for abused and neglected children in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

The campaign also incorporates the Department of Children and Families' It Can Be Done project, a social-media campaign that highlights the success of Florida's foster youth in pursuing educational, professional and life goals.

It's an important element to the campaign because foster homes for teenagers traditionally have been harder to find, said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for Devereux CBC.

"We have so many wonderful homes and nurturing caregivers, but it's not enough to keep up with the number of children coming into care," Kaiser said. "We have too many children and teens in group care or placed in other parts of the state, some as far away as Jacksonville.

"Twenty five new homes would be enough to start bringing them home," she said.

Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast is home to about 1,300 children receiving services due to abuse or neglect. Those services are coordinated by Devereux CBC. Of the 1,300 children in care, 314 children are placed in licensed care - meaning they live in foster homes or group homes.

And nearly half of those live in a residential facility.

Some children need the services of a group home, but many more, particularly young children, do not, said Denise Natalizio, Martin County Director for Devereux CBC.

"We would like to see all but those who truly need group care live in a family setting," Natalizio said.

Devereux CBC officials will officially kick off the 25 by 25 campaign during the first of its spring community breakfasts. That event, sponsored by the Junior League of Martin County, is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. April 24 at the Woman's Club of Stuart.

Subsequent breakfasts will be held at 8:30, April 25, at the Unity Church of Vero Beach; and at 8:30 a.m. May 15 at the Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County. Those events are sponsored by the Exchange Club of the Treasure Coast and Guardians for New Futures, respectively.

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