

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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## News & Media

### More than 1,000 children in foster care? No sweat – Santa’s got this

**Port Saint Lucie** – Children in foster care change addresses. They leave their homes. They move in with strangers. Sometimes they leave those homes, move into group homes and then move back into different foster homes.

But Santa finds them every year with a little help from the community.

A total of 56 local businesses and community groups coordinated toy drives and collected more than 3,000 gifts for children served by Devereux Community Based Care, the non-profit organization that coordinates and oversees the child-welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

Most of the 750 children receiving services out of home - as well as another 350 living under protective supervision - received 2-3 gifts each, said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for the organization.

The massive, four-county collection is coordinated each year by Devereux CBC and Children's Home Society, which provides case-management services in Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee counties.

The two agencies split the total caseload - Devereux CBC finding sponsors in St. Lucie County and Children's Home Society coordinating the project in the surrounding counties.

"This was a very successful year for sponsors," Kaiser said. "We added several new sponsors and many of the ones we've worked with for years were able to double the number of gifts they collected."

Sponsors this year included Guardians for New Futures, which collected gifts for more than 200 children, and the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office and Verizon Wireless, which provided a combined 111 new bikes, bike locks and helmets.

Members of the dependency court system in St. Lucie County, led by Judge Michael C. Heisey, also collected gifts and responded to one of the season's more interesting requests.

"We had one young lady ask for a saddle," Kaiser said. "She got the saddle."

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