

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

Call us at (772)873-7800



## News & Media

### Family turns challenge into mission to help foster teens

**Port St. Lucie** - Melissa Smallwood describes her childhood as "chaotic." Her mother and father had a volatile relationship because they both struggled with mental illness. Melissa entered the foster care system when she was 12.

Michael Smallwood tells a similar story - a chaotic and unstable home life, and an abusive stepfather on top of that.

They met, found comfort in one another, built a family and then reached out to bring comfort to hurting children, especially teenagers.

"Melissa and Michael have always had a heart for children, and want to provide children with the safe and loving environment they missed growing up," said Kate McEwan, licensing specialist with 4KIDS of the Treasure Coast, the organization that recruits, trains and licenses foster homes for the Devereux Community Based Care system.

Devereux Community Based Care coordinates and oversees the child welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.



Melissa and Michael Smallwood

During the past year, the Smallwoods have had up to three children in their home at the same time, all older children and teens. One of the teenagers has since left the home but remains a part of their family.

The Smallwoods are in the process of adopting one of the remaining children in their home and already are considering adopting the second.

"Throughout their foster care journey, the Smallwoods have been a wonderful example of unconditional love for teenagers, promoting an environment of healing with their biological parents and persevering in the midst of challenges," McEwan said.

Devereux Community Based Care and its team of licensing agencies are looking for more people to become foster parents. If you are interested in learning more, [click here](#).

#### More News:

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Contact: Christina Kaiser  
(772) 528-0362



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Devereux CBC • 10570 S. Federal Hwy. Port St. Lucie, FL 34952 • (772)873-7800

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