

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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## News & Media

Foster parents recognize the impact teachers have in their homes

**Port St. Lucie** – When Palm City Foster Parent Deana Peterson took in a 5-year-old with a significant reactive attachment disorder, her child's kindergarten teacher did, too.

"I had a choice, but she didn't," Peterson said. "She became a partner to us, and that's made all the difference in our experience as foster parents."

May is National Teacher Appreciation Month, and local foster parents want to make sure the community understands how important the school/home partnership is, especially for foster homes.

Throughout the month, which is also Foster Parent Appreciation Month, local caregivers are sharing stories and writing letters to local media outlets about how teachers have changed the lives of abused and neglected children and impacted their own ability to care for them.

Peterson said her foster daughter's teacher, Debra Noonan, treated her with respect, love and patience and sought guidance from other professionals when the child did not respond to traditional teaching or behavior-modification methods.

"She worked tirelessly to make sure the school system addressed any of her needs," Peterson said. "This little girl was our first foster child...when others wanted to give up, when we wanted to give up, Mrs. Noonan encouraged us, educated us and became an ally and friend."

The significance of that partnership cannot be overstated, said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for Devereux Community Based Care, the organization that oversees the child-welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

"These are hurting children who bring their emotional trauma with them everywhere they go – into the classroom and into the foster home," Kaiser said. "It's a challenge that sometimes results in a placement disruption, which creates more trauma to the child."

Teachers play a critical role, not just in the lives of children, but in the system as a whole, Kaiser said.

"In this case, a teacher probably was responsible for maintaining a placement and creating stability in a child's life," she said.

Teachers and educators also are the subject of a newly unveiled foster-parent recruitment campaign, called One School, One Child.

"We have a lot of foster parents who work in the schools," Kaiser said. "They are helping us recruit new caregivers from among their peers."

For more information on how to become a foster parent, or to schedule a One School, One Child presentation, [click here](#).

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