

# Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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## News & Media

### Devereux Community Based Care launches One School One Child campaign

**Stuart** – A foster-parent recruitment campaign aimed at teachers and other members of the school community officially rolls out May 16 at Jensen Beach High School.

Called One School One Child, the campaign will use teachers already licensed as foster parents to help recruit new caregivers from among their peers.

It's the latest step in an ongoing effort to increase both the number and quality of foster homes in the Devereux Community Based Care child-welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

"We believe the education community is a natural fit for recruitment," said Denise Waninger, Devereux Community Based Care Martin County Director. "These are people who are already dedicated to children, and who have the heart and skill set to be excellent caregivers."

Devereux Community Based Care officials also are hopeful that targeting K-12 educators will help increase the number of foster parents willing to take older children.

"We have a lot of homes licensed for children under the age of 5," Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said. "We hope that by bringing our message to the schools, we'll find more people willing to give homes to school-age children."

Devereux Community Based Care serves nearly 1,000 children and their families. Of that number, about 250 live in foster homes or in residential group care. There are currently 159 foster homes in the four-county area.

"That seems like it should be enough, but these homes already have children living in them or restrictions on ages," Kaiser said. "So we still have to split children up when they come as sibling groups or send them into group care when they don't meet the requirements of the individual home."

The key, she said, is to have an expansive and versatile network of homes flexible enough to accommodate the demands of the child-welfare system.

The goal of the One School One Child campaign is similar to the long-established One Church One Child model: Identify at least one home from each school and then engage the rest of the school as a support for the home.

“We think the best way to do that is through peer-to-peer recruitment,” Waninger said.

Jensen Beach High School will be the first in a yearlong series of on-campus presentations to school staff, she said. The 10-minute presentation, which will also include the perspective of former foster youth and the biological children of caregivers, will be taped and then uploaded to the Martin County School District website.

Assistant Principal of Discipline Lori Kane, who is a licensed foster parent in Martin County, will be the event's featured speaker.

The next presentation will be delivered to staff at the Okeechobee Achievement Academy. If you work in a school and would like to schedule a One School One Child presentation, call Kaiser at (772) 528-0362.

Listen to one foster parent's story.

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