

Devereux

COMMUNITY BASED CARE OF OKEECHOBEE & THE TREASURE COAST

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News & Media

Sanctuary4Kids lives up to its name

Port St. Lucie - It didn't take long for Sanctuary4Kids to live up to its name.

Since opening in April, the shelter has provided temporary emergency shelter to 11 children who were not immediately able to move into more permanent placements. Of those 11 children, two were new to care and nine were at the home as the result of placement disruptions.

"It's really starting to take off," said Cheri Sheffer, Chief Operating Officer for Devereux Community Based Care, the nonprofit organization responsible for child-welfare services in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. "It's really prevented a lot of sitting in offices."

Instead, the home provides a friendly place for children who have been removed from home due to abuse or neglect to take a nap, do homework or have a hot meal.

"It's a much better alternative to waiting in a child-welfare professional's car or office," Sheffer said.

Sanctuary4Kids was the brainchild of Debbie Butler and the nonprofit Guardians For New Futures, which spearheaded a community fundraising initiative and oversaw construction of the home.

It was deeded to Hibiscus Children's Center, which now operates the facility through a mix of public and private funds, including a grant from the Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County.

There is room for six children to stay at the shelter, which was designed to provide temporary respite for up to 23.5 hours. The home has three bedrooms, a quiet room, an outdoor play area, and is filled with welcoming toys, games, stuffed animals and books.

A look inside Sanctuary - Debbie Butler, right, shows off the home's open floor plan during a tour last winter.



A look inside Sanctuary - Debbie Butler, right, shows off the home's open floor plan during a tour last winter.

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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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