



The CCKids Connector

We moved! Keep reading for open house information.



St. Lucie County Fire Rescue Lt. Adam Zuccaro gives helmets to children attending the Lil' Feet Back to School event, held August 7 at the St. Lucie West Wal-Mart.

When they aren't putting out fires, these men and women are putting on little shoes

ST. LUCIE WEST— More than 40 children who receive services from Communities Connected for Kids were treated to new shoes during a special event coordinated by St. Lucie County Fire Rescue.

The event, hosted August 7 at the St. Lucie West Wal-Mart, provided about 200 shoes to children from several different non-profit organizations, including CCKids.

About 400 shoes were provided to children during a similar event the week before, bringing the total of shoes provided in summer 2019 by Fire Rescue's Lil' Feet program to 600.

This year marked the first time shoes were provided during an event. In previous years, Payless Shoe Source gift cards were given out to families, who bought shoes at various times throughout the year. When the company went out of business earlier this year, the Lil' Feet Committee decided it was time for a change.

"I was skeptical about the change, because it's not always easy to get families out to an event," CCKids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said. "But we had a great showing, and everyone was very happy and grateful to be there - it was a lot of fun."

Attending families were able to purchase shoes and socks up to \$25 per child during the event. Most of the shoes were less than \$15, which meant many families went away with two pairs of shoes for every child.

Plans for a January event are underway. All shoes are funded by proceeds of the Lil' Feet Boot Auction, held each spring.

In the picture above right, St. Lucie County Fire Rescue Paramedic Meradeth Smith helps children with their chosen shoes.





Communities
Connected
for Kids



WE MOVED!

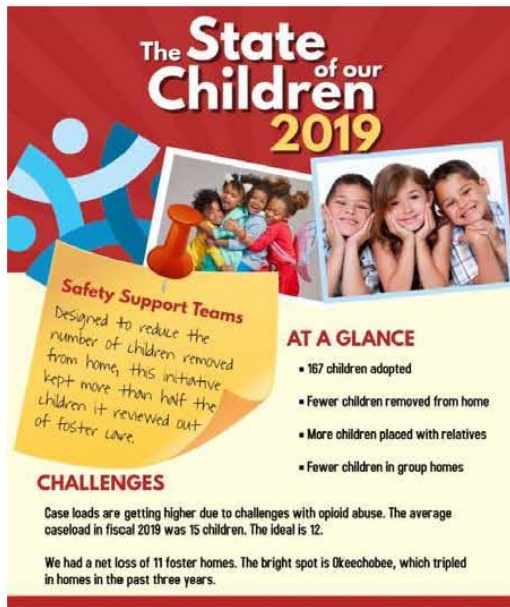
Join us for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house to
celebrate our headquarters' move to St. Lucie West

8:30-10 a.m., August 29
1860 SW Fountainview Blvd.
Port St. Lucie

Ribbon Cutting at 9:15 a.m.

Click anywhere in the flyer to register for our open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Fewer local children enter foster care system in 2019



PORT ST. LUCIE — The number of Treasure Coast and Okeechobee children in foster care fell in 2019, from a high in 2018.

That information is part of an end-of-fiscal year report released this month by Communities Connected for Kids, the non-profit organization that oversees the foster-care system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

The number of children removed from their homes declined by 22 percent from July 2018 to June of this year - a decrease of 103 children that CCKids officials caution may be misleading.

“We are actually seeing more children come into care because of the opioid epidemic,” CCKids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said. “But we had a particularly bad year in 2018, so by comparison, we look a lot better – but the problem hasn’t gone away.”

Statewide, there has been a consistent upward trend of children going into out-of-home care since mid-2013. And more children in care means heavier caseloads.

“We strive to be at 13 children for each case manager,” Kaiser said. “We’re at 15.”

But there is still cause to celebrate.

Safety Support Teams, designed to reduce the number of children removed from home, kept more than half the children it reviewed safely out of foster care this year.

Other good news locally includes slight increases in the number of children living with relatives rather than in group homes, and 167 children found forever homes this year.

That's a 30 percent increase over CCKids’ adoption goal for 2019, Kaiser said.