



The C.C.Kids Connector

You Named Us, Now Celebrate with Us Community Ribbon-Cutting Ceremonies Planned



Communities Connected for Kids invites local residents to one of three special ribbon-cutting ceremonies scheduled to begin later this month.

"We want to celebrate our new name and identity with the people who gave it to us," said Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser, referring to the community renaming

contest from which the organization's name was born. "Together with our local chambers of commerce, we are planning ribbon-cutting ceremonies throughout Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast."

- The first ceremony is scheduled from 9-11 a.m. August 23 and includes an open house at C.C.Kids' Administration Office, 10570 S. Federal Hwy., Port St. Lucie
- The next ceremony will take place at noon, August 29, at 208 NE Seventh St., Okeechobee
- We will round out the summer series of ribbon cuttings at 11:30 a.m. September 13, at 1459 20th St., Vero Beach

No ribbon cutting is planned for Martin County, though a separate chamber of commerce event is being planned for November.

Refreshments will be served at each event. Registration is not required, but appreciated. Links to each event are available below:

[Port St. Lucie](#)

[Okeechobee County](#)

[Vero Beach](#)



Back to School Roundup

Thanks to a generous community, children served by the local dependency system will return to school this month with backpacks, school supplies, new shoes and hair cuts.

More than 3,000 school supplies were collected during the Stuff the Bus event last month. The event, a partnership among the United Way of St. Lucie County, Communities Connected for Kids and several local businesses, resulted in more than 400 backpacks full of school supplies for children in C.C.Kids' foster-care system.

"This is a volunteer-run project," said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for C.C.Kids and a member of the United Way committee that oversees several back-to-school collections, including Stuff the Bus. "And it's literally a contribution of sweat equity - our volunteers work in the blazing heat to get this done."



The State of Our Children

Each summer, we take a look back at our fiscal year and share our successes and challenges with you in an annual State of Our Children report.

Among our greatest success stories is the adoption of 186 children - a measure that continues a three-year trend of exceeding the annual adoption goal. In fact, this year's goal of 135 adoptions was exceeded by nearly 40 percent.

Likewise, we did a better job this year of finding relatives and other loved ones for children who were removed from home. That number increased by 20 percent, from 351 in July 2017 to 421 this year.

Of the backpacks, about 300 were assembled July 31 by the St. Lucie County Property Appraiser's Office (pictured above). The remaining 100 backpacks were donated by various local contributors, including Sunshine Health and others who wish to remain anonymous.

But the generosity doesn't stop there.

Hair Cuttery is expected to contribute 800 free hair-cut vouchers to C.C.Kids, while about 250 Payless Shoe cards will be donated to the organization through the Lil' Feet project.

C.C.Kids is part of both projects and receives donations for children in the dependency system for its participation.

But it wasn't all good news.

This year's outcomes show the results of an increasing number of children entering care due to substance abuse, specifically due to the opioid crisis. Caseloads are on an uptick for the first time in three years, moving from 1 case manager per 13 children to one per 14.

Likewise, the number of children removed from home increased 11 percent, while the number of children living in residential group care decreased only 1 percent despite efforts to limit the use of those facilities.

The total number of foster homes also decreased this year from 152 to 146.



In the Clinic with Nurse Pam

Back to school preparations are already well underway! In addition to buying all those, much needed, school supplies, do not forget to get your child "health ready" - that is, making sure they are all up to date on those important annual physicals, vaccines and dental checks!

If you are a C.C.Kids caregiver and you're not sure if your child is due for anything, you can check with your Dependency Case Manager. They are always willing to help and are goldmines of information. Also, don't forget to check if your child is on the Sunshine Child Welfare Specialty Plan. You may be able to access reward dollars for participating in healthy activities. Use these extra dollars for school items, snacks, groceries, or - when you need it - lice treatments.

Originally from Canada, Pam became a nurse in 2011 after graduating from York University in Toronto. Her clinical experience includes emergency medicine, community nursing and sexual assault care. Pam moved to Florida with her husband (and IT wizard) Jody Boyer in 2014 and began work with Communities Connected for Kids the next year. She coordinates, assists and monitors the medical needs of children served by C.C.Kids.

