



## The C.C.Kids Connector - *Happy New Year!*



When planning this next year, please put time in your schedule to advocate for a child in foster care.

*We're taking a year-long truth journey! Follow us on [Facebook](#) as we dispel common myths surrounding foster care. Think getting involved is too time-consuming? Think again, says Kandice West, who was a single mom with a full-time job when she became a foster parent. Kandice said she had to schedule in some new time commitments - like medical, school and sports appointments - but those adjustments were minimal. Catch more stories, interviews and posts throughout the year in this multi-agency, foster-parent recruitment and awareness campaign.*

**Resolve to help a child who needs you**

**By Paul Nigro**  
**Guardian ad Litem Circuit 19 Director**

**Port St. Lucie** - January is the month when millions of Americans look to the new year as a fresh start. We make resolutions to go to the gym more often, go back to school or start a business. We want to change for the better.

But if you need inspiration for a New Year's resolution, consider changing the life of an abused or neglected child. It sounds daunting, but there are so many ways you can get involved in helping children in need. You can find a way that works for you.

In our judicial circuit – Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties – about 1,100 children are involved in the dependency system through no fault of their own. These children have been abused, abandoned or neglected. Many are traumatized; many are in foster care. Many are separated not only from their parents but their siblings. They need a champion, someone to speak for them in court and defend their best interests. Or even someone to take them home and nurture them. Frankly, they need you.

The number of children who enter the foster care system far exceeds the number of foster homes. It is a growing problem statewide, but only local communities can solve it. And while our communities continue to grow, I believe we've also maintained those priceless small-town values of looking out for each other and helping your neighbor. Customs that sometimes get lost in big cities.

Our kids don't need a lot. They just need someone competent and caring, a role model, someone they can trust. They need someone to stand up for them because they can't do it themselves. But your guidance can give them a new way of looking at their lives.

Every day the people of this community do amazing things for children in need, from fostering and adopting them to advocating for them as Guardian ad Litem volunteers to raising money for their scholarships and school supplies. There is something you can do to help a child.

If January is about new beginnings, please consider making one for a child who needs you.

For more information about becoming an advocate for a child, please contact the Guardian ad Litem Program at 772-785-5804. To learn more about foster care or becoming a foster parent, contact [Communities Connected for Kids](#).

*Paul Nigro is the Circuit Director for the Judicial Circuit 19 Guardian ad Litem program. He and his agency are partnering with Communities Connected for Kids, 4Kids of the Treasure Coast, Camelot Community Care, Mount Bethel Human Services, Place of Hope*

*Treasure Coast and the Roundtable of St. Lucie County to raise awareness about the need for foster homes and to dispel common myths surrounding the foster-care system.*



## Communities Connected for Kids names Alex Munoz first vehicle scholarship recipient

**Stuart** - Vero Beach resident Alejandro Munoz has the drive to finish his education and become a Registered Nurse. But, for now, his drive only has two wheels.

That's about to change.

Munoz, 18, will trade his bicycle for a car next week, when he becomes the first recipient of a vehicle scholarship program designed to improve the education outcomes for teens and youth in the foster-care system.

The idea for the program grew from discussions earlier this year among members of a multi-agency task force that addresses and responds to key risk factors among children. Munoz will receive his car – a high-quality, used car donated by Infiniti of Stuart – during a special cocktail reception made possible by the generous support of Calibert Home Loans, Rothenthal, Levy, Simon and Ryles, and Hoskins, Turco, Lloyd and Lloyd.

Munoz entered the foster-care system when he was 17 and got his GED through the Indian River County School District, said Chris Martinez, supervisor for the Road to Success program, which prepares teens and young adults for life after foster care. He attends Treasure Coast Technical College and takes one IRSC class. His goal, Martinez said, is to become a registered nurse.

“This will allow him to attend IRSC at the main campus in Fort Pierce and expand the area in which he can seek employment,” said Martinez, who describes Munoz as resilient and goal oriented.

In fact, Munoz grew up chronically homeless before entering foster care.

“In the short time he was in foster care, he was able to earn his GED, obtain stable employment and has dedicated himself as a youth advocate on a statewide level,” Martinez said. “I know that this opportunity will help to ensure that his star will continue to shine bright.”





## In the Clinic with Nurse Pam

The holidays are over, but the flu season is just ramping up, and I am starting to see more and more people missing from the office. Fortunately, it's not too late to get the flu shot.

The season usually peaks between December and February, but can last as long as May.

And if travel is in your New Year's resolutions, don't forget to check about other important immunizations, like those for hepatitis A and hepatitis B. Those and others may be recommended for popular destinations like Mexico or the Caribbean and often require considerable lead times.

And while you're at it - make sure that your children are up to date on their routine vaccinations too!

*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.*