



## The CCKids Connector



*Alex Munoz holds the key to his new car, a 2013 Nissan Altima that was awarded to him through a new community scholarship program. Click [here](#) for video on Facebook.*

### Vero Beach resident becomes first recipient of Vehicle Scholarship Program

By Christina Kaiser

**Stuart** - The 18-year-old watched quietly as the silver-grey cover was pulled back.

His shoulders fell, and his chin dropped to his chest. Overcome by gratitude, he quietly circled the car - a gift he still could not believe.

"Thank you," he said, struggling for words against a still-present feeling of disbelief. "Just.

"Thank you."

So began the Infiniti to Success event Friday, January 18, when Alejandro Munoz became the first recipient of a local, multi-agency Vehicle Scholarship Program.

The Vero Beach resident and aspiring Registered Nurse traded in his bicycle for a 2013 Nissan Altima donated during the event by Infiniti of Stuart.

"This will allow him to attend IRSC at the main campus in Fort Pierce and expand the area where he can seek employment," said Chris Martinez, supervisor of the CCKids Road to Success program, which prepares young people like Munoz for life after foster care.

Munoz was awarded the scholarship because he proved himself resilient and goal oriented, overcoming homelessness and bicycling 22 miles round trip to work, Martinez said.

"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.

The idea for the Vehicle Scholarship 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. Those agencies include the Guardian ad Litem Program, Henderson Behavioral Health and Communities Connected for Kids.

One of the greatest barriers for teens and young adults in foster care is transportation, Martinez said. Reliable transportation, he said, is often the difference between going to college and not going to college.

*The scholarship and Friday's award event was made possible by the support and contributions of local businesses, including Infiniti of Stuart, Caliber Home Loans, and the law firms of Rosenthal, Levy, Simon & Riles, and Hoskins, Turco, Lloyd & Lloyd.*

*If you would like information about how to contribute to the scholarship program, please call (772) 528-0362. Click [here](#) for video of the scholarship award.*





## In the Clinic with Nurse Pam

Now that the holidays are behind us, it would be nice if we could just snuggle in our pajamas and relax - right?

Unfortunately, that is not the case for caregivers, especially those who care for foster children. Foster children can be challenging at times, and it may not seem like you get the break you need.

Caregiver burnout is real, but it can be prevented. Below is a list of free, local resources where you can find help:

- Caregiver Support Meetings, from 6:30-8 p.m., every third Monday. Contact SunCoast Mental Health at (888) 373-5010 for more information.
- Parenting and Life Skills Class, from 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesdays, at Care Net Treasure Coast, 6704 S. U.S.1, Port St. Lucie.
- Parent Forum, for parents and students with physical and mental challenges, from 5:30-7 p.m., every third Monday, Golden Gate Center for Enrichment, 3225 SE Dixie Hwy., Martin County.

You also can call the CCKids Caregiver Support team: Caitlin Wescoe, (772) 324-3130, Jerra Nicol Wisecup, (772) 249-3188 and Jill Poole, (772) 617-1687.

*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.*



**Exchange Club donates to foster care services in Indian River County**



**Board recognizes residents for contributions to holiday season**

The Exchange Club of the Treasure Coast presented a \$1,000 donation to CCKids during its January meeting in Vero Beach.

"The prevention of child abuse is an important project for our group," Club President Leslie Spurlock said.

The group raised money and decided to give it to CCKids to help provide for the needs of Indian River County children in foster care, Spurlock said.

"It can be used to help provide anything they need all year long," she said.

*Pictured above are, from left, Eric Menger, Leslie Spurlock, Phil Barth, CCKids Indian River County Director Caryn Toole, and Kathy Kragh.*

The CCKids Board of Directors recognized the efforts of Michael Kaiser and Debbie Butler during the Board's 2019 annual planning retreat January 22.

Butler, a St. Lucie County resident, coordinated the efforts of the non-profit Guardians for New Futures to collect gifts across three counties for children served by the dependency system.

And Kaiser, from Stuart, engineered, built and pulled the CCKids parade float in the Vero Beach, Fort Pierce, Okeechobee and Stuart Christmas parades.

*Pictured above are, from left, Michael Kaiser, Debbie Butler, Board Member Doris Plym, Board Chair Kathryn Hensley, and, in front, CEO Carol Deloach.*