



## The CCKids Connector

Happy Father's Day!



*Girl Scouts Audrey Mila and Natalie Belisle were inspired by a family friend and foster parent to write the book, "Happily Ever After." The book was presented and read during the May 14 meeting of the Martin County Foster Parent Association.*

## Hands of hope decorate local courtrooms

**FORT PIERCE, June 12, 2019** — About 230 children in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast went home to stronger, healthier families this past year after time apart for a variety of reasons – most commonly substance-abuse related.

About 30 more are expected to go home this month, many of them spending today - Father's Day - with their own dads.

Communities Connected for Kids and Judicial Circuit 19 are celebrating these families throughout the month, beginning with a ceremonial Hanging of the Hands in county courtrooms.



The hands – construction-paper cutouts strung along the walls of dependency courtrooms in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties – represent the children who went home from the foster-care system between May 2018 and this month.

But they do much more than that. They celebrate the triumph of hard work, love and commitment over social ills, such as substance abuse, that lead to the removal of children from their homes.



Most importantly, they offer a glimmer of hope for families just beginning their journey into the foster-care system.

“This is one of the worst moments of their lives,” said Jerra Wisecup, CCKids licensing & caregiver support specialist.

“They are people who just lost their children, they just entered a very complicated and confusing system, and they are unsure of what the future may

bring or even when their children will come home,” Wisecup said.

The hands in the courtroom demonstrate to these families that reunification is within their reach and that their families can be whole again, Kaiser said.

Another way the judicial and child-welfare community is celebrating reunified families this month is with a social-media awareness and education campaign. The campaign includes a special recognition of reunification heroes – case managers, substance abuse

and mental-health providers and others in the community who help make the return of children to their families possible.

And to mark the occasion, those families will receive a family goody bag containing card games, snacks, family bowling passes courtesy of St. Lucie Lanes and, in Martin County, vouchers to Chick Fil A donated by the restaurant chain.



*Do you know a Reunification Hero? Email [Christina Kaiser](mailto:Christina.Kaiser@flcourts.org) by June 21, and let us know a little about that person!*

*Pictured in the top photo is Judicial Circuit 19 Dependency Judge for Martin County Steven Levin. Pictured in the middle photo, CCKids Court Liaison Todd Trumpore prepares a string of paper hands to decorate the dependency courtroom of the St. Lucie County Courthouse.*

*And pictured bottom, from left, are Shaniece Patacer, Angela Yearwood, Dee VanDuser, Sheri Wargnier, Judicial Circuit 19 Dependency Judge for Indian River County Michael J. Linn, CCKids Indian River County Manager Caryn Toole, Mira Wesley, Andrea Crawley and Brooke Gaylord.*

## Foster parents bid farewell to association president

The Martin County Foster Parent Association said goodbye to its longstanding president, Marilyn Southwick, during its May meeting.

Southwick has served as leader of the organization for more than five years and is a foster and adoptive mother.



Stepping into the role of association president is Palm City foster mom Ericah Brinson. Brinson and her husband, Richard, have been foster parents in Martin County since 2015. She and her sister-in-law, Sabrina Brinson, have operate the Treasure Coast Foster Closet, which they founded in 2017.

*Pictured above, from left, are CCKids Licensing & Caregiver Support Supervisor Jill Poole, Camelot Community Care Licensing Supervisor Tricia Curl, Marilyn Southwick and Jenny Price.*

## Headlines & Other News of Note

OnStar alerts cops to Florida baby left in hot car  
[WINK News - June 5, 2019](#)

A vehicle assistance company helped save a 1-year-old Florida girl after her mom passed out inside a hot car. The Columbia County Sheriff's Office arrested Kristina Bowmaster on Sunday on child neglect charges after her 1-year-old was found in a hot car, according to a police report. The woman was also found inside the car, passed out on the passenger side of the vehicle.

Free and reduced swim lessons available

The aquatics section of the St. Lucie County Parks & Recreation Department is offering reduced-fee swim lessons in July at Lincoln Park Pool on a first-come, first serve basis, to children already participating in its summer camp program. To reserve a slot, contact Erin Lau at (772) 871-8031 or email [laue@stlucieco.org](mailto:laue@stlucieco.org).

CCKids moves to new location June 21

CCKids is moving! The move to 1860 SW Fountainview Blvd., Port St. Lucie, is being made to accommodate staffing growth and to improve accessibility from its surrounding service areas of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee counties. All phone numbers will remain the same.

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