



The C.C.Kids Connector



Ma'Kyah's is the latest Forever Family story featured on CBS 12 News with Liz Quirantes. The 9-year-old and Quirantes are pictured here at Loggerhead Marinelife Center, where several upcoming Forever Family segments were videotaped. Tune in and help us find this sweet girl her forever family! Remember, adoption from foster care is free! You can see Ma'Kyah's story at cckids.net. Want more feel-good holiday stories from our area? Click [here](#) to see the Stivers Family featured on the Today Show.

Instant Family tells a funny, relatable story

Port St. Lucie - Communities Connected for Kids and its local caregivers celebrated National Adoption Month earlier this week with a private screening of Instant Family.

The movie, about a couple who decide to become foster parents and end up adopting three children, gives an important - and fairly realistic - glimpse into the lives of foster and adoptive parents.



"Foster parents haven't always been portrayed sympathetically or in the best light, so it was nice to see this movie portray us like real people who love our children and do our best," said one local foster dad present for the Sunday, Treasure Coast 16 showing in Jensen Beach.

The show - free to caregivers thanks to the sponsorship of Florida Sen. Gayle Harrell, Grand Senior Arcade and Seacoast Bank - also explores the real-life system challenges of keeping siblings together and finding families willing to take teenagers.

"Those are very real issues for us," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids Community Relations Director. "It's a big part of the education we do throughout the year, but especially this month, during National Adoption Month."

There are more than 800 children throughout Florida waiting to be adopted. To get that message out, organizations like CCKids are partnering with the Florida Coalition for Children, the Department of Children and Families, the Selfless Love Foundation and the Dave Thomas Foundation to launch the One Heart, One Home campaign.

Other on-going CCKids campaigns include the Forever Family project, which leverages the power of local media to find adoptive homes for children in foster care, as well as online social-media recruitment campaigns and the day-to-day work of Children's Home Society, the organization that provides adoption services to CCKids' system of care.

If you are interested in fostering or adopting, please visit us at cckids.net. New classes throughout Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast regularly are scheduled to accommodate busy schedules. Please take a look. You could be the one heart that changes a life forever.





This is Foster Care series to showcase Christmas stories & holiday traditions

Communities Connected for Kids will launch a special social media campaign featuring the Christmas stories of foster parents and their "instant families" beginning Friday.

This is Foster Care will share the memories and holiday traditions of local foster families through 30-second videos posted to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Vero Beach foster mom Tammy Ortiz will launch the campaign with a special look back at one of her families' most memorable holidays, followed each week with a different story told by caregivers throughout Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

Not already following us on social media? You can find us [here](#).



In the clinic with nurse Pam

With Halloween in the rear view and Thanksgiving just a day away, it's the perfect time to talk nutrition and proper dental care.

There's nothing more exciting for most kids than a sack of candy or hot-out-of-the-oven Thanksgiving pies. But Newton (not the fig kind) always said, "Where there is an action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." And in this case, he may have been referring to calories and cavities.

Candy and many of the treats of the holiday season are full of sugar, making it extremely important to monitor your children's intake as well as their teeth-brushing habits.

And while you are at it, why not make that semi-annual dental appointment or annual physical before the end of the year. Finally, for your caregivers and foster parents reading this, don't forget about those extra dollars you can get from the Sunshine Child Welfare Specialty Plan for those visits!

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.



Holiday Star- Berry Fresh & customers bring the juice

This special section will run through December, highlighting the various sponsors whose combined work make Christmas possible for more than 1,100 children in the local foster care system.

There are more than 50 sponsors in this year's Making Christmas Bright program, the CCKids gift drive that provides holiday cheer to more than 1,100 children.

What makes Berry Fresh so special is its customers.

"Every year, we give Berry Fresh the wishes of about 75 children, and every year, all those wishes are fulfilled by the cafe's loyal customer base," said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for CCKids.

Berry Fresh, which hosts toy drives at both Port St. Lucie and Stuart locations, has been a Making Christmas Bright sponsor for seven years. Berry Fresh owner Tim Timoteo and his staff hang the wishes of children in foster care from Christmas trees. Customers come in for breakfast or lunch, select a wish off the tree and then bring a gift back on their next visit.



CCK float coming to you soon at a Christmas Parade near you

The elves at Communities Connected for Kids have been busy this month building wagons, carving blocks and wrapping gigantic presents.

And all their elfish creativity will be on display beginning December 1, when CCKids rolls out its Radio Flyer parade float in the first of four community Christmas parades.

Participation in the parades is the latest activity of the CCKids Outreach & Activities Committee - and the most recent opportunity to introduce the organization's new name and branding to the community.

The CCKids Radio Flyer also can be seen December 2 at the Fort Pierce parade, then December 7 in Stuart and December 8 in Okeechobee.

Stuart resident Michael Kaiser donated his time, talent and treasure to building the float, while CCKids staff members are helping with finishing touches.

Volunteers, CCKids families and CCKids providers are welcome to walk with the float at any of the parades.

If your business would like to become a sponsor in the Making Christmas Bright project, please email Christina Kaiser.

If you are interested in joining us, please sign-up [here](#).

