



## The C.C.Kids Connector



*Airyanna is the youngest of four sisters featured over four weeks of CBS 12 news segments. Their stories were told through the Forever Family program, which leverages the power of media to help connect waiting children with adoptive homes. Airyanna's story ran Tuesday, Oct. 16. All four children are now in the process of being adopted together thanks to the program. You can see her story [here](#).*

Foster care champion arranges private screening of Instant Family movie

**Port St. Lucie** -Gayle Harrell has long championed the rights and welfare of children and families in the Florida foster-care system.

So when their story was made into a major motion picture, the eight-term Florida House representative did what she always does: She got to work on behalf of local foster families.

She made some calls, found some sponsors and arranged a private screening of *Instant Family*, a movie starring Mark Wahlberg about a couple who learn the joys and frustrations of parenthood - and foster care - when they decide to adopt three siblings.

The screening - an invitation-only event - is scheduled for the Sunday of opening weekend at the Regal Treasure Coast Mall Stadium 16.

"Foster and adoptive parents are special people with special, defining moments in their lives that should be shared with the world," said Harrell, who is running for District 25 of the Florida Senate. "This movie validates their commitment on a large scale, and may even encourage others to consider foster care."

Grand Senior Arcade, a local gaming parlor, is underwriting the screening for 135 caregivers and child-welfare professionals, while Mrs. Harrell and Seacoast Bank contributed money to ensure each caregiver receives a \$5 concessions card.

"I don't think you ever stop giving," said Nicholas Cannon, who owns Grand Senior Arcade with his brother, Brandon. "It's not just about being able to write a check - it's about being able to touch somebody's life."

Caregivers will be invited to stay for 20 minutes after the movie to participate in a panel discussion about foster care, adoption and how well the movie depicted reality.

"We're hopeful the movie reflects the reality of foster care, like the importance and difficulty of keeping siblings together, and the experiences of teenagers in care," CCKids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said. "We also hope it steers clear of old ideas, like foster-to-adopt."

Foster care systems throughout the state have worked hard to decrease the practice, which results in unusable foster homes when people get licensed as foster parents but refuse children they don't want to adopt.



"We have so many beautiful adoption stories in our foster-care system," Kaiser said. "But those adoptive parents started out as foster parents with a mission to provide temporary respite to children who were going home."

Check out the Instant Family movie trailer [here](#).



## Good for You: Miracle Thomas

Former C.C.Kids youth worker Miracle Thomas was recognized October 17 as Outstanding Youth Advocate during the 2018 Palm Beach Child Advocacy Awards Reception.

The 23-year-old has been a member of the Treasure Coast Chapter of Florida Youth SHINE for five years, serving as Treasure Coast chapter president for the past three. Youth SHINE is a statewide organization that teaches youth in foster care to advocate for change in the foster-care system.

Thomas attends Indian River State College and dreams of studying holistic medicine to help people, like her sister, who have developmental disabilities.



Her journey has not been easy. Miracle was born into foster care to an incarcerated mother. She moved from home to home, eventually settling with an abusive relative. At age 16, she came back to foster care but was separated from her siblings - an event that severely impacted Thomas.

She credits her faith for helping her to succeed and said she believes things happen for a reason.

Adversity, she said, is a challenge and a motivator.

At age 18, Miracle was introduced to Youth SHINE by her C.C.Kids Road to Success mentor Margie Dotson. She credits that first meeting with helping her to find her voice and to be her own advocate.

Now, Miracle speaks at foster-parent meetings and trainings and with other professionals in the child-welfare community. She has advocated for change to Florida's dependency system, traveling often to Tallahassee to meet with legislators, and speaking regularly at child-welfare summits. Recently, she was a guest on NPR's 411 Teen.

"She is an amazing young woman," said C.C.Kids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser, who worked with Thomas on a local radio show about the foster care and other child-welfare topics. "She's determined to give a voice to the voiceless and to make a better future for all children."

Pictured above is Thomas, flanked to the left by Road to Success Supervisor Chris Martinez and to the right by one of the program's specialists, Derrick Fennell.

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## In the clinic with nurse Pam

Fire Safety Week was October 7, and hopefully everyone is making it through the month without any significant boo-boos. But here are some tips for treating burns in the event you are unable to avoid the occasional singeing or scalding:

Treat minor burns with cool (not cold) water first. After about 20 minutes of this, apply a cool compress. Apply lidocaine, a local anesthetic to ease pain. You can also apply antibiotic ointments, aloe vera or honey. (Honey has natural antibacterial properties.)

Finally, wrap the area with loose, non-adhesive gauze and take an over-the-counter pain reliever. It's also important to reduce your sun exposure and, as Mom would say, "Don't touch!"

Speaking of Mom, remember that butter she used to rub on your burns? That's a big no-no. Butter and other oils hold heat in and cause the skin to continue burning. Egg whites, toothpaste and ice also are off the list and should not be used to treat burns. Seek medical care if any of the following occurs:

- The burn affects a widespread area more than 2 inches in diameter
- For burns on your face, hands, buttocks or groin area
- The wound becomes painful or smelly
- You develop a fever or the wound oozes
- You think you have a second- or third-degree burn
- Fire was from an electrical wire or socket, or from chemicals

*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.*

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### Holiday Star- Ashley Minton

*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.*

Ashley Minton and Minton Law, P.A., have been Making Christmas Bright for teens in foster care for four years.

Minton, along with partner Jeffrey Smith and assistant Tiffany Wile, became sponsors in the holiday gift collection program in 2015, specifically collecting gifts for St. Lucie County teenagers.

"We always came up short for our teenagers until Ashley and her team joined the project," said C.C.Kids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser, who coordinates the toy drive.

Since joining the project, Minton Law, P.A. has contributed more than 400 gifts, including special requests, like a saddle for a girl who was taking horse-back riding lessons.

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



### Pack the House

Treasure Coast Food Bank's Fourth Annual pack-a-thon is here again, and Team C.C.Kids will be there to help prepare holiday meals for our neighbors struggling with hunger.

The two-day event is scheduled for Oct. 26-27 and offers three-hour shifts for volunteer groups.

Volunteers will help pack meal boxes in preparation for the holiday season. More than 500 people participated in last year's event.

This year's goal is 10,000 holiday meal boxes in 24-hours - so gather friends, family, and co-workers and sign up for a shift.

Enjoy music, karaoke, delicious food generously donated by local vendors, raffles and more all while packing the house!

Your support will make a difference in the lives of children, seniors, and families struggling with hunger along the Treasure Coast.

To learn more, click here or email [volunteer@tcofoodbank.org](mailto:volunteer@tcofoodbank.org).

