



Connections - February 14, 2020



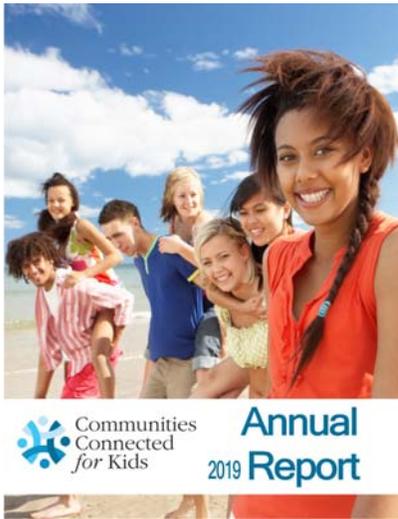
In January, CCKids participated in Children's Week at the Capital and Rally in Tally, two events that help focus attention on issues impacting children and families. Our guests this year were adoptive mother Nicole Hughes and her son, Christian, who helped advocate on behalf of CCKids' system of care.

National report shows Florida is right for kids

Tallahassee — A study by the Texas Public Policy Foundation found recently that Florida's community-based system of child welfare ranks sixth among the nation's 50 states.

Called the Right for Kids Ranking, the study is an annual look at how well each state performs at achieving the best results for children who enter the foster-care system. Among the findings are:

1) Florida ranks No. 6 among the best performing states and is only one of two states that rank in both best performing and most populous states.



2) Our state ranks No. 2 in finding adoptive homes quickly and safely for children.

3) Florida ranks in the top 20 for reducing abuse and neglect.

Read the full study [here](#).

Communities Connected for Kids is one of the 16 Community Based Care Lead Agencies that make up Florida's system of care.

See how we did last year by clicking [here](#), or on the image, for a copy of our 2019 Annual Report.

Community shows its love to foster families

ST. LUCIE WEST - Foster families are extra special in Florida. The rest of the nation waits until May to celebrate those in our community who open their hearts and homes to children in foster care.

But we in Florida get a jump on the celebrations, reserving the second week - this week - in February as Florida Foster Family Appreciation Week.

"Love and respect for our foster families is a year-long commitment, and not something we wait to do in the spring," CCKids Community Relations Director Christina Kaiser said, referring to National Foster Family Appreciation Month, which occurs in May.



"We try to do things throughout the year, but the time set aside for special observation gives us an opportunity to really dig in, and also to get the community more involved," she said. "There is a lot of activity surrounding our caregiver community right now."



For example, foster families with school-age children were invited to attend a free shoe event this week. The give-away was coordinated by Lil' Feet, an organization that raises money and provides shoes to children who need them.

Each child received a pair of new shoes and pack of socks up to \$25. About 50 children in the foster-care system have received shoes through the program since the beginning of the year.

The Martin County Fair also is getting in on the celebratory festivities, providing dinner and free entry to Martin County foster families on a designated day next week.

And the Momentum Foundation - a local non-profit organization that teaches aerial acrobats - is hoping to offer monthly trapeze classes to foster and adoptive families as a bonding and trust-building exercise.

"We also work hard - always - but especially this week - to educate the community about foster care and our need for more caregivers," Kaiser said.

Several social-media campaigns kicked off recently, including an inter-agency Myth of the Month campaign that aims to clear up common misconceptions about foster care, and the Child of the Month series, which will feature the pictures and stories of specific children.

"We always say how much we need foster homes," Kaiser said. "This campaign will put a child's face on that message."

Follow both campaigns on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).



Good for You - Linton, Dotson receive first GEM awards of the decade

Communities Connected for Kids congratulates Kenyetta Linton and Margie Dotson for winning the second quarter Going the Extra Mile – or GEM – Award for excellence in serving children and families in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

They have the distinction of being the first employees of the new decade to be honored with the award.

Linton, a dependency case manager in St. Lucie County, received the award in the Emerald Division, which covers case-management staff.

She has several difficult cases, including two families with teen parents, said her supervisor Lyamar Shaw, adding that Linton maintains her composure, works hard and often volunteers to help children assigned to other case managers.

Dotson, who works with teens and young adults in the foster-care system, received the award in the Ruby Division, which recognizes the work of administrative and program staff.

"Margie is dedicated to the youth," said Christina Kaiser, one of three people who nominated Dotson for the award.



Bill Watch - Jordan's Law and the Accountability Act

We are well into the 2020 Florida legislative session and working with the Florida Coalition for Children to keep an eye on proposed laws that could impact our community of care.

Two of those bills include Senate Bill 1326 - the so-called DCF (Department of Children and Families) Accountability Act - and Senate Bill 122, also known as Jordan's Law.

The Accountability Act would create an Office of Quality Assurance and Improvement, set up a grading system and require annual reporting from the state and its providers, such as CCKids.

We are watching this bill closely as many of its requirements already are met in current statute and practice and could create unnecessary burdens for the state's Lead Agencies, like CCKids.

Jordan's law would reduce the number of cases a caseworker takes and would increase communication between caseworkers and law enforcement.

It would also require special training for parents, police and caseworkers regarding head trauma, the leading cause of child abuse deaths.

"When she is not with them, she is
advocating on their behalf."
