



# Communities Connected *for Kids*

## Connections - May 29, 2020

*Keeping us connected during the shutdown and beyond*



## Caregivers find little surprises on their porches



**ST. LUCIE WEST** - When the going gets tough, the tough get - care packages.

This week, local foster parents, who have kept their doors open despite the fear of COVID-19, are being surprised by volunteers bearing care packages donated by individuals in the community.

It's all part of CCKids' Adopt a Foster Family initiative to thank local caregivers during National Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

Nearly 150 caregivers are receiving packages - many of them tailored to their



family's interests - thanks to the generosity of individuals in the community. Each package is being hand delivered by CCKids staff who are leaving the packages on doorsteps and ringing doorbells before falling back a safe distance to thank the residents for their steadfast service to children.

"We wanted to do something special for our foster parents, because they are our essential workers," said Jill Poole, program director for licensing, post-adoption and caregiver support. "We usually host a pool party, but we knew that was off the table this year due to COVID-19."



Project organizers matched sponsors to local foster families, then coordinated pick-up and delivery of the care packages.

"They didn't have to be elaborate or expensive," Poole said. "Many of them included family games, puzzles, baking kits or gift cards."



If you're interested in becoming a foster parent, CCKids and its contracted recruitment agencies are offering training classes via Zoom. Call 772-873-7800 and ask for Jerra Wisecup.

## Donation takes Adopt a Foster Family project to a new level

When CCKids unveiled its Adopt a Foster Family initiative earlier this month, project organizers thought they might attract enough community sponsors to serve half of the organization's caregivers.

"We weren't sure what to expect," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director and project participant. "There was a very short turn-around for getting sponsors."

And besides, she said, it was a new project.

Then a representative from the Kathryn A. Basile Foster a Dream Foundation reached out with a \$5,000 contribution - enough to ensure that all foster parents who signed up for the project would receive a care package.



Stephen Basile, foundation president, said he learned about the project in a CCKids newsletter and reached out immediately.

"We have partnered with CCKids over the past 12 years," Basile said. "When we read about the Adopt a Foster Family drive, we felt compelled to help out during this very challenging time.

"We hoped to assure that the program reached as many foster families as possible."

The Foster a Dream Foundation was created 2009 in honor of Kathryn A. Basile, pictured above. Basile was a local child advocate whose life's passion was improving the lives of children in foster care.

The foundation annually supports CCKids programming, specifically its Road to Success program, which prepares teens and young adults for life after foster care.

If you would like to make a donation to CCKids, please contact [Christina Kaiser](#) or call (772) 873-7800.

## Even during a shutdown - GEMS sparkle

**St. Lucie West** – Communities Connected for Kids congratulates Krystal Meher and Pauline McIntosh for winning the third quarter Going the Extra Mile – or GEM – Award for excellence in serving children and families in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

You might say, given the health crisis and emergency shutdown, that they went the EXTRA extra mile.

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



"Krystal has been dealing with a difficult case the past several months and has efficiently and effectively worked with several departments in order to make sure her child's needs were met quickly," said her supervisor, Mo Shihadeh. "She's been patient and understanding and worked very hard with a child who has not had much stability."

Meher is also a newer employee, having started her position at CCKids last summer.

"Although I've only been in this position for nine months, I feel honored that the hard work put in has been recognized," she said.

McIntosh, a placement specialist, received the award in the Ruby Division, which recognizes the work of administrative and program staff.

"Pauline has for years contributed greatly to the placement department; she is lead for one of our most active counties and has handled it and excelled even under stress," said her supervisor, Melisa Morris.

"We recently had an on-call situation where we were called very close to midnight to immediately move one of our hard-



to-place youth.

"Right after that, a placement request for a large sibling group came in, and Pauline worked through that Friday night and well into the next day.

"The needs were not tied up until after 6 p.m. the next day, but Pauline continued to push through and was able to get everything and everyone situated and content."

McIntosh is the first to say her success is due to the support around her.

"I could never do any job without the people who are behind me," she said. "It doesn't matter who is on call, we all work as a team."

CCKids' Board of Directors recognized Meher and McIntosh on a Zoom call during its May Board meeting. Each received \$100 and a plaque.

## Inside the mission



*From time to time, we share internal communications in an effort to give you a more intimate understanding of our work. In the spirit of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we want to share this note, written by a caregiver who received a care package donated by someone in the community:*

"What a generous and thoughtful gift! I cannot say thank you enough...."

When my doorbell rang, I thought to myself.....'Oh lord, my house is a mess, the 6-year-old and I have been making a homemade doll house (fun but messy).'

Imagine my surprise when I found a beautiful (masked) lady standing with an arm full of gifts....Then, the even bigger surprise....the gifts were for ME! You can guess that each of the kids were excited to find gifts I was gladly willing to share.

You are a true angel, each wonderful gift is exactly what I was in need of. May God bless you with ten fold of the blessings you have shared with our family."