



Communities
Connected
for Kids

Connections - July 1, 2020

Keeping us connected in this temporarily remote world



Barb Feak and Kaye Jones deliver [It's My Very Own](#) bags to Communities Connected for Kids in early June.

Local church makes "My Very Own" bags for children in foster care

Fort Pierce- A sewing group at the Midport Seventh-Day Advenist Church wants to make sure children entering foster care have at least one thing to call their own.

The Treasure Coast chapter of the It's My Very Own, a faith-based organization that provides handmade bags full of toiletries and age-appropriate items to children displaced from their homes, provided the first 10 bags of a promised

ongoing supply to Communities Connected for Kids in June.

They were gone within a week, said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director.

Fortunately, It's My Very Own makes it easy to replace the bags. Each comes with a self-addressed, stamped postcard that can be removed and placed in the mail when the bag is given to a child. The postcard alerts the group that its time to replace the bags.

Each bag includes a handmade quilt, stuffed animal, toys, books and personal items. The bags are age appropriate and are delivered to local agencies, like CCKids, charged with removing children from home because of abuse or neglect.

Rashandia Johnson, dependency case manager supervisor in St. Lucie County, distributed six this week for children in her unit.

"These bags provide comfort to children who come into care and give them something of their own at a time when all they might have is the clothing on their backs," Johnson said. "The stuffed animals and blankets in the bags give them something to cuddle at night when they are crying themselves to sleep after being removed from their families."

The Treasure Coast chapter of [It's My Very Own](#) is one of seven in the state. Together with the similar My Stuff program and other local drives that provide overnight bags and suitcases to children in foster care, the program is moving local child-welfare professionals away from a one-time dependence on plastic bags when moving children out of their homes.

"Those days are over," Kaiser said. "Our community has made sure that local children enter foster care with some dignity - something that's hard to do when everything you own is in a trash bag."

CCKids, United Way kick off Virtual Stuff the Bus - *virtually*

The [United Way of St. Lucie County](#) and longtime partner Communities Connected for Kids kicked off this year's Stuff the Bus school supplies drive Monday via Facebook Live.



Click the video to the right to view the Live event. The link will take you to the CCKids' [Facebook page](#). Once there, scroll down for the post.

It was a virtual kickoff to a virtual event - the adaptation of a 21-year-old project that will run through July 24. The change was made as part of the

COVID-19 response and includes shopping from an online school supplies list.

Donors can participate by purchasing items from an Amazon wish list. Supplies will be delivered directly to the United Way and then distributed to schools and to Communities Connected for Kids. Click [here](#) to purchase supplies or make a financial contribution.

"We really need this program," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director, who participated in the Live event. "We're not sure what the school situation will be like in the fall; if we continue remotely, students with limited resources won't even have access to a teacher's classroom supply."

We're celebrating independence with the Red, White and *YOU!*

Fort Pierce- Like many nonprofit agencies, Communities Connected for Kids uses social media as a platform to raise awareness for important issues.

Beginning in March and extending well into the summer, CCKids hosts a series of month-long campaigns to educate the community on topics ranging from social work and child-abuse prevention to foster care and the reunification of families.

We are adding one more this month, celebrating both our nation's independence and the independence of young adults in foster care with Red, White and You!

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) throughout July as we bring you stories of success from young people leaving foster care and beginning exciting new chapters in their lives.

"We know that children who have at least one caring adult to provide support and guidance experience better outcomes later in life," said Jerra Wisecup, CCKids licensing and caregiver support specialist. Wisecup co-leads an inter-agency marketing committee to create top-of-mind awareness for the community's need for caregivers.

"This month's campaign will highlight teens and young adults in an effort to communicate our local need for foster families for children 12 and older," she said.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, call (772) 873-7800, and ask for Jerra.

**Stay water-safe at home -
in this week's *In the Clinic*
with Nurse Lisa**



Summer is a time for lounging by the pool, splashing through the sprinklers or taking a dip in the ocean (but not this weekend - the beaches are closed!)

It's a time when the rest of the nation can experience the perennial warmth and sunshine that we in Florida know year round. And it's also a good time to review water-safety guidelines, especially with so many of us staying close to home.

Most drowning deaths, or near drownings, happen in backyard swimming pools and are due to a lapse in adult supervision.

You have enough to worry about right now. Keep calm, and carry on with these simple rules for staying water safe this summer:

- Teach children water safety and swimming skills as early as possible.
- Always have eyes on the kids when near or in water. That includes the bathtub, swimming pool, retention ponds, lakes, ocean and when boating (have kids wear life preservers when on a boat).
- If you have a backyard pool, install alarms and fencing with self closing latches.
- If a child goes missing, check all water sources first - seconds count in preventing a drowning death.
- As an adult, know water safety, rescue and swimming skills.

For more information, go to: Ndpa.org National drowning prevention alliance.