



Connections - September 10, 2020

Keeping us connected in this temporarily remote world



Parade Rolls Out for Local Adoption

Port St. Lucie - The adoption journey of one Port St. Lucie family ended August 29 with a celebration of family, friends, local residents and officials who just wanted to be a part of someone's happier ever after.

Despite a sudden downpour of rain, a parade of about 20 cars rolled past the family, who had just finalized their adoption August 26. They waved the well wishers on from their front yard.

The parade was coordinated by the child's Guardian ad Litem volunteer, Lori Denig.

"Lori fought hard to get her child to

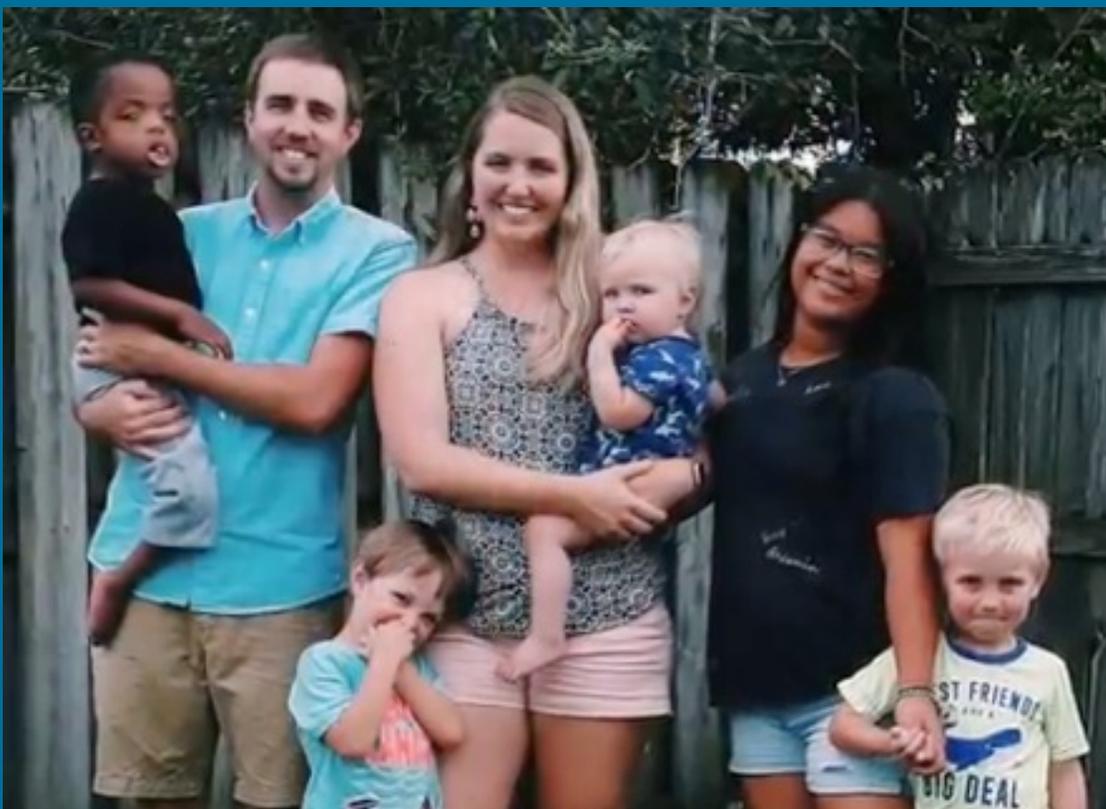


permanency which for this precious family was adoption," said Nicole Hughes, GAL volunteer recruiter. "Lori organized an amazing car parade that included friends, family and community partners."

Those partners included Sean Boyle of the Children's Services Council, Will Armstead of the Boys and Girls Club of St. Lucie County, Port St. Lucie Mayor Gregory Oravec and St. Lucie County School Board Member Kathryn Hensley, who also is the president of the CCKids Board of Directors.

Interested in learning more about adoption? Click [here](#) to learn more, or email your inquiries to tcadoptions@chsfl.org.

\$26,000 Gift Makes Van Dream a Reality for Family Adopting Boy with Special Needs



Port St. Lucie - Ask and it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall find...perhaps in your driveway.

The St. Lucie County Keen Family needed a new van specially outfitted to accommodate their soon-to-be adopted son and his wheelchair.

So a group of local foster parents reached out on the family's behalf and contacted Forever Family, a program based in South Florida that works with local media outlets to help find adoptive homes for children.

News Channel 12 - a regular Forever Family partner - agreed to produce and air a news segment about the Keens, and Forever Family set up a fundraiser to help pay for a new van.

The program had raised \$34,129 as of Wednesday.

"We will be purchasing the van Friday," said Gia Tutalo-Mote, Forever Family founder and director. "Any dollars left over will go toward the necessary van modifications."

Money for the van was raised on several platforms, and included \$6,596 from Paypal donations, \$610 from Facebook, checks in the amount of \$550 and a single anonymous donation totaling \$26,373.60.

"Unfortunately, the van we got when we started fostering can't fit a wheelchair and five children," said Savannah Keen, who, with husband Michael, has four other children, including a teenager adopted from the foster-care system.

Tune in to News Channel 12 every Tuesday at 5 p.m. for the latest Forever Family segment.

New Community Resource Aims to Keep Children Out of Foster Care System



Vero Beach – As lead agency for child welfare in our community, CCKids is always looking for programs and agencies that will help prevent child abuse and neglect. We are thrilled to welcome Safe Families for Children to the community!

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram this month as we introduce you to this amazing new resource that has the power and potential to prevent child abuse.

The program primarily serves Indian River County but hopes to expand and serve the entire Okeechobee and Treasure Coast area, said Jackie Herron-Whitfield, who founded the local chapter in 2019 with her husband, Jim.

At the core of this program is a network of host families that provide short-term respite for children whose families are experiencing crisis such as homelessness, unemployment or substance abuse – things that can result in child abuse. Currently, there are 17 host families in Indian River County, Herron-Whitfield said.

Some residents may remember the Hibiscus Crisis Children's Nursery - a safe place where parents could take their children while managing their crisis. Safe Families is like the nursery, but with a team of host parents instead of a facility.

Learn how you can get involved by visiting [Safe Families for Children](#), and follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) all month for more information about our newest partner.