



Connections - September 24, 2020

Keeping us connected in this temporarily remote world



Despite this year's coronavirus outbreak, the 2020 Treasure Coast Child Summit goes on. Guardians for New Futures Director Debbie Butler hosts the virtual summit from the quiet boardroom of Communities Connected for Kids' offices, which have been largely empty since the company began working remotely last spring. Nearly 150 people are attending this year's summit, scheduled from Sept. 23-24.

Officials Hopeful Initiatives Improve Experience for Prospective Foster Parents

Port St. Lucie - Several changes are in store for Florida's foster-care system, including systems to improve access to resources among caregivers and a centralized hotline number to make it easier for prospective foster parents to get information.

Those systems will be available from an online hub set up on the state's [MyFloridaMyFamily](#) website. The hub was established in partnership with the governor's Faith and Community Based Initiative, the Department of Children and Families and local

Community Based Care agencies, like CCKids.

They include Aunt Bertha, a 211-type program that makes it easier for families to access mental health and other services, and CarePortal, which connects families being served through the child-welfare system of care to a network of faith-based donors in the community.

Most recently, the website began directing interested visitors to the newly-established Florida's Foster Information Center, a hotline staffed with current or former foster parents who answer callers' questions based on their own experiences and provide information about fostering.

CCKids' Licensing and Caregiver Support Coordinator Jerra Wisecup is the local contact for hotline calls and has received four calls this week from people interested in learning more about foster care.

"Instead of being left to surf the Internet alone - and trying to find the correct local agency to begin the process - prospective foster parents are given one central telephone number," Wisecup said. "They make a human connection with someone who knows the road they're about to travel, and they are directly connected to an agency point of contact assigned to help them begin the journey."

Wisecup, like most child-welfare professionals, hope the centralized hotline and a more organized network of community resources and services will help draw more people into foster care and adoption.

There are 22,781 children in Florida's foster-care system. About 250 of them live in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

If you are interested in learning more about foster parenting, call Florida's Foster Information Center toll-free at 1-833-678-3735, or 1-83-FosterFL.

20-year program gets face lift for Christmas



CCKids' Making Christmas Bright program has been fulfilling the holiday dreams of children in foster care for 20 years.

That program will get an overhaul this year when it merges with the Guardians for New Futures' Holiday Gift Drive for Abused & Neglected Children.

"We've been coordinating the community toy drive together for years," said Christina Kaiser, CCKids director of community relations. "When we lost a major partner five years ago, the Guardians stepped in and sponsored all our children in three of the four counties we serve."

They have more volunteers and more connections in the community, Kaiser said. It just made sense to merge the programs entirely and let the Guardians take lead.

Making Christmas Bright sponsors were informed about the changes earlier this month

and have agreed to participate in the 2020 drive.

"The truth is, nothing will change for our sponsors or our children," Kaiser said. "It's just a better way of doing a good thing."

For more information about the project, including sponsorship opportunities, call (772) 528-0362

Headlines & Other News of Note

Golf Free, Help Children

On Monday, September 28, at the Sandridge Golf Club in Vero Beach, advocates and leaders across the Treasure Coast will play as many holes as possible from dawn to dusk to help kids served by the local foster-care system.

Find out how you can be part of this annual event - and golf for free - by contacting Sharon Ellington at SharonE@4kidsofsfl.org.

The event is part of 4Kids' annual Golfting4Kids Challenge, which raises money to help fund programs for children in foster care. 4Kids of the Treasure Coast is one of CCKids' community partners and is contracted to recruit, train and license foster parents in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.



THURSDAY,
SEPTEMBER 24
6:30 PM TO 8 PM

JOIN THIS FREE ZOOM TRAINING:
[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/85624050627](https://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/85624050627)

MEETING ID: 856 2405 0627

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

PRESNTED BY:

CCASA
COMMUNITY COUNCIL AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE

SAFIR
A COALITION
A healthy community, free from substance abuse.

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS
DON'T MISS WHAT'S
HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Join Us for a FREE Virtual Presentation to learn about "popular" concealment devices that teens sometimes use to hide drugs, alcohol, and paraphernalia.

This presentation is ideal for: parents, caregivers, teachers, law enforcement, counselors, or anyone who works with young people!

CANT MAKE THIS TRAINING AND WANT TO SCHEDULE A FUTURE PRESENTATION? HAVE QUESTIONS?
EMAIL US AT: HILARY@MCCHILDRENSALLIANCE.ORG

What's Hidden in Plain Sight

If you have teen-agers and worry about substance abuse, this free training is for you!

Join the virtual call from 6:30-8 p.m., today, for Hidden in Plain Sight, a training about teen drug trends and popular apps designed to conceal information from parents and caregivers.

Join by clicking the [link](#), or log into your personal [Zoom](#) account and enter the meeting ID: 85624050627.

Hidden in Plain Sight is hosted by the Community Council Against Substance Abuse and the Substance Awareness Center.