



Connections - November 19, 2020

*Keeping us connected in this temporarily remote world*



*Retired Educators of St. Lucie County President Harry Williams and his wife, Bonita Williams, deliver the first load of Christmas packages to CCKids.*

## COVID Can't Stop Christmas

**By Christina Kaiser, CCKids' Community Relations Director**

**St. Lucie West** – It was a little dicey at first, but Communities Connected for Kids' annual Christmas toy drive is on track for a record year of paper, packages and perennial smiles.

The first load of gifts arrived to the CCKids St. Lucie West offices Tuesday,

delivered by Santa's Elves Harry and Bonita Williams. The Williamses represent the Retired Educators of St. Lucie County, one of dozens of local community groups organizing gift drives for children in local foster care and protective services.

The Retired Educators always kick off the season for CCKids, the organization that oversees child-welfare services in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. They coordinate early and usually bring their gifts to the group's November meeting.

Ms. Williams said they were unsure how the project would work this year because all their group meetings still are attended remotely. But they identified a few physical locations and scheduled times for members to bring their toys. In the end, she said, it seemed a little easier.

Gift collection begins in earnest December 7, when CCKids - together with partner agency Guardians for New Futures - begins collecting from businesses, churches and community groups throughout the four counties. Much of that work is possible thanks to Rytech Treasure Coast, the mold remediation company that lends its trucks and drivers to the project.

It's an intensive labor of love, and there is no possible way that CCKids could do this without the Guardians or Rytech -- or any of the groups coordinating drives on our behalf.

If you are interested in learning more about the gift drive, including how to get involved, email [christina.kaiser@cckids.net](mailto:christina.kaiser@cckids.net).



## Self Care for Sanity *In this week's, "In the Clinic"*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN

**St. Lucie West** - I would like to continue this month with another way to keep us healthy and sane. How about a little meditation! And no, I don't mean that you have to sit cross-legged for hours at a time and chant phrases. There are many ways to meditate.

First, let's start with the benefits, which include a reduction in stress and anxiety, improved self-image and outlook on life, enhanced self-awareness, greater attention span, improved sleep, lower blood pressure and better cognition.

There also are studies that show meditation is thought to help with ADHD because it thickens the prefrontal cortex, a part of the brain involved in focus, planning and impulse control.

Meditation can be done anywhere and in any position: standing, sitting, lying

down -- even walking. As a matter of fact, Japanese physicians have been prescribing "forest therapy" for patients with high blood pressure, stress and anxiety problems. This too is a form of meditation comprised of two hours a week meandering on a forest path! (Sign me up if it means cooler weather!)

There is no one right way to meditate; it's is truly personal choice. I encourage you to explore some of the links below to see what works for you. Most are free or have free sections to use! Check them out at:

[Mindful.org](http://Mindful.org), [headspace.com](http://headspace.com), [smilingmind.com](http://smilingmind.com)

Until next time...ouuummmmm.

## Youth in Care Find Voice with the Help of Local Partners

The Selfless Love Foundation, an organization dedicated to finding permanency for children in foster care, this week awarded a \$1,000 grant to Communities Connected for Kids to help establish a local youth council.

The council will follow the model established by the foundation's One Voice Impact, a program that helps young people in foster care advocate for issues important to them.

CCKids' Road to Success staff is now working to identify young people, ages 16 and older, who are willing to participate.

"Our department is passionate about youth advocacy and empowerment, and this grant adds another layer to what we want to offer," said Margie Dotson, RTS specialist.

Road to Success, which prepares teens and young adults for life after foster care, also received news today that its longtime partnership grant through the Kathryn A. Basile Foster a Dream Foundation was renewed for another year.

The \$10,000 grant provides funding for high-school graduation and college-related expenses, as well as campus tours and advocacy trips to Tallahassee.

"We are responsible for advocating on both a local and state level for youth currently and previously in the system of care," Ms. Dotson said. "We will continue to cultivate the leaders of tomorrow through these combined partnerships."