



# Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - December 23, 2020

*Merry Christmas!*



*Volunteers from Guardians for New Futures and CCKids check in gifts during a toy drive that spanned three weeks, four counties, and more than 100 sponsors. In total, the Angel Gift Drive - which absorbed CCKids' Making Christmas Bright project this year - collected, loaded, unloaded, checked, sorted, and organized about 4,000 gifts and served nearly 2,000 children, including 1,100 from the CCKids' system of care.*

## Foster Families Walk, Drive Through Reverse Christmas Party

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

**St. Lucie West** – Like most things this year,  
annual foster family Christmas celebrations are

taking new form.

That was the case in St. Lucie County Saturday, when the St. Lucie County Foster Parent Association, together with volunteers from the Surfside Church, coordinated a reverse - or drive through - Christmas party for local caregivers and the children they love.

More than 60 children and their foster families registered to attend the event, which they walked through or drove through.

"Camelot Community Care started off the line with hot chocolate and candy cane spoons," said Rose Bailey, an adoptive mom and CCKids foster parent mentor.



"There were several stations where children could stop to receive books, bubbles and goodie bags - all masked, and all socially distanced."

COVID could not break a 16-year tradition in Vero Beach, either. The Junior League of Indian River County, which has hosted an annual Christmas party for local caregivers

since 2004, continued its tradition with a similar drive-through party.

"It was a wonderful event, and each family received a dinner to go," said Jill Poole, CCKids licensing and caregiver support director who helped coordinate the event.



## The Holiday Season & Your Very Jolly Mental Health *In this week's, "In the Clinic"*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN

**St. Lucie West** - This past year has certainly been different in many ways. The lack of contact with our families and friends, and the fear of the virus have all contributed to additional stress in our lives.

Now with the holiday season upon us, I'd like to share eight simple rules for keeping your mental health grounded:

1. Be kind to yourself! Know your triggers, and put your own health - both physical and mental - first.

2. Scale back! The commercials with all the happy, smiling families together, the perfect meal on the table, lots of presents—realize this is all fictional and driven by marketing to sell us something. Manage your time and be realistic. We can only fit so much into one day. Write down what is most important to you that needs to fit in the schedule and always leave down time in between scheduled activities.
3. Speaking of down time, make sure you do one activity a day for you. That can include reading a good book or article, taking a walk in the forest or at the beach, listening to music or watching a movie.
4. Exercise in any form releases natural feel good and stress-relieving hormones in our bodies.
5. Get back to basics: Eat fruits and veggies, and get enough sleep.
6. Practice relaxation! When you feel your shoulders touching your earlobes, take five deep, slow breaths.
7. At bedtime, practice the “10 Finger Gratitude.” Name 10 things that you were grateful for in this day.
8. Ask for help! The holidays are stressful with all the extra commitments, and sometimes memories can be difficult. In our area you can call 211 for mental health resources Everyone needs someone to talk to at different times in their lives - don't be embarrassed to ask for the help.

I wish you all peace and love in this season and joy for the New Year!

## CarePortal Meets First Needs

CarePortal officially launched in St. Lucie County. Thursday, December 3.

The system helps put local resources at the fingertips of case managers and other direct-service staff through a local network of faith organizations coordinated by 4Kids of the Treasure Coast.



For example, a request for two twin beds and mattresses was made during a live demonstration. The request went to five local churches, one of which responded during the event. Within hours, the requesting case manager was coordinating delivery of the beds to a local caregiver who needed them to accommodate an adoption.

The system is available only to protective investigators with the Department of Children and Families and CCKids case managers on behalf of families served by the dependency system. And for now, it is active only in St. Lucie County.

If you are a family in need - and your children are in the dependency system - contact your case manager for help.

