



Communities
Connected
for Kids

Connections - February 10, 2021



It's Florida Foster Family Appreciation Week! Foster and adoptive families are just like yours - there are tough times, but also moments of great joy. Our caregivers know that sometimes a "dab" of laughter - and a good home - are the best medicine. Follow us on [Facebook](#) this week for more fun!

CCKids Top of the Class

St. Lucie West – It's hard to get excited about words like, "eligibility" and

"candidacy." They are bits of jargon from the world of child welfare.

But it's important to talk about them, because they translate into things that matter: Things like stability for vulnerable children and better, more successful programs that help people.

As of this month, Communities Connected for Kids has met the statewide goal of licensing 40 percent of children placed with relatives and non-relatives. That's called candidacy, a push to license non foster-parent caregivers in order to draw down federal funds. This is essential in Florida and throughout the nation because of new federal laws that significantly impact the way states pay for child and family services.

Candidacy translates into a couple of very important things.

First, it means that more relatives can receive the types of services that have been available to licensed foster parents for years - services that build emotional and financial support and create greater stability for children.

And second, it means that Communities Connected for Kids is now eligible for more federal funding.

In fact, nearly 80 percent of all CCKids cases now are eligible for federal dollars, freeing up limited state funds and creating opportunities for more and better services in our community - and ranking CCKids among the top performers in the state.

This is especially important this year, when the impact of COVID-19 will make tax-generated state funds less available.

It's one more example of how the Community Based Care model is working in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast and how the people behind that model are working hard to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of local children and families.

To learn more about [CCKids](#) call Christina Kaiser at (772) 528-0362. To read about other successes in our community of care, click the [2020 Annual Report](#).

If You Shop on Amazon, Consider Donating Your "Smile" to CCKids

By Christina Kaiser - If you are like me, you do a lot of online shopping these days - and much of it from Amazon.

In fact, after nearly a full year of simple click, pay and deliver shopping - not to mention the super simple return process (a key feature for any of us with picky teenagers) - I may never return to brick-and-mortar shopping. I especially like the option to direct a portion of my expenses



to my charity of choice by signing up to AmazonSmile.

Alas, I must confess that it took me nearly the entire past year to realize that all that shopping was not generating donations for CCKids, my chosen charity.

You probably already know that Amazon donates .5 percent of everything you buy to whatever organization you select. But did you know that you have to make those purchases either directly from AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) or from the Amazon phone app? That's right. If you've purchased hundreds - maybe thousands - of dollars in items from Amazon.com, your purchases have NOT been generating donations.

I learned this the hard way just last week when a colleague mentioned that she had racked up more than a \$28 in donations to CCKids. Eager to find out what my own contribution was, I went straight to my account and learned that I had donated - wait for it - 43 cents.

I'm assuming many of you have a similar story. And so I leave you with this heard-earned lesson: If you shop from Amazon, you have two choices for turning your expenses into donations: 1) You can shop directly from Amazon's charitable arm, at smile.amazon.com, or, 2) You can shop from your app. But if you shop from the app, make sure to turn on the AmazonSmile setting!

It's so simple, you'll want to tear your hair out. Open up your app, click on the three-line menu icon (BTW, did you know this is called the Hamburger icon?), scroll down to settings. Click AmazonSmile and slide the button to the on position. Now, every time you buy something from your app, half a percent of eligible purchases will go to the charity of your choice.

Need more information, including how to choose a charity? Click [here](#). Good luck!



Inside the Mission

"Thoughts of Being a Statistic"

From time to time, we like to take you behind the the scenes to introduce you to our families and to share more personal experiences. Today, we share a poem written and shared with permission by a young woman in care, Chanel Chloe Jackson. Her poem is titled:

"Thoughts of Being a Statistic"

You may not know me
However, you may know someone like me.
When you look in the mirror,
What do you see
Is it a number

Or is it the eyes
That hides the wounds inside
The fear of not being good enough
The hatred of the thought of being alone again.
Maybe not fitting in.
Unsure how to love what's within.
Yearning for deep conversations
Yet too distressed to invite anyone in.
Exhausted with frustration.
Lack of motivation.
A+B=C
And they expect us to all have the same answer.
When we haven't all been given the same variables.
Can't you see
Numbers don't define thee.
The little boys with no home
The little girls who father are gone
The young mothers fighting for their own
The sisters and brother who strive to keep the siblings bond strong.
But what's wrong
You can believe we beat the odds on our own.
Our value comes from who we are.
Not from what we do.
Who will we be remembered as
Or are we just numbers to you



Scholarships Available

Step Up For Students administers five scholarship programs for Florida's schoolchildren:

- **The Florida Tax Credit and Family Empowerment Scholarship** for children K-12 based on household income.
- The **Gardiner Scholarship** for children ages 3-22 who have certain special needs.
- The **Hope Scholarship** for children K-12 who are victims of bullying.
- The **Reading Scholarship Accounts** for public school students in grades three through five who struggle with reading. Students who are classified as English Language Learners, and who are enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of English Language Learner students, will receive priority.

Visit www.stepupforstudents.org to learn more and join our interest list to be notified when applications open for the 2021-22 school year.

If you're interested in marketing materials or would like for Step Up For Students to host a webinar, please contact:

Melissa Jaramillo
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Please share this information with anyone you know who might benefit from one of Step Up's scholarships.