



Connections - March 10, 2021



Members of the Midport Church branch of the It's My Very Own project display their most recent bounty of care bags. Each bag is handcrafted and filled with age-appropriate items then donated to CCKids on a monthly basis. Need more information? Call Christina Kaiser at (772) 528-0362.

Fewer Children Removed from Home; Rate at 10-Year Low

St. Lucie West – Communities Connected for Kids has much to celebrate this month, beginning with the number of children removed from home due to abuse or neglect.

That number decreased significantly in Florida's southeast region, which includes Broward, Palm Beach, and the counties covered by CCKids – Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

From July 2020 to January 2021, Child-welfare professionals in the area removed 205 fewer children than the same period the year before. Even

better, Judicial Circuit 19, which is made up of Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast - the smallest part of the southeast region - was responsible for 45 percent of the total reduction.

While last spring's school closures and resultant decrease in calls to Florida's abuse hotline may have had something to do with that reduction, it's not the whole story, said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director.

There may be fewer children coming into care because of last year's shutdown, she said, but the rate by which those same children are removed from home also is down – from 5.38 children per 100 alleged victims to 3.96.

That's the lowest the measure has been since 2011.

"And while our numbers were going down, other regions throughout Florida experienced an increase in removals during the same time," Kaiser said.

This says a great deal about the local system of care and the mental-health, substance-abuse and child-abuse prevention providers whose programs are engaging families early and preventing removals down the road.

"Safely serving children in their own homes greatly diminishes the trauma and disruptions that occur as a result of removal," Kaiser said. "That requires strong programs and services that can be trusted to keep children safe."



Benefits for Dependent Children *In this week's, "In the Clinic"*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN

St. Lucie West - Attention caregivers: How well do you know your benefits on the Sunshine Child Welfare Plan?

The health insurance plan for children in the dependency system includes benefits that a traditional plan does not. For example, there are no copays for sick or well visits, no scheduling restrictions and these over-the-counter benefits: (click [here](#)). You can even have orders for things like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, baby wipes and diapers delivered to your home.

Other benefits includes a rewards card that accumulates credit for purchases when you complete annual health visits or participate in tobacco cessation, diabetes annual care or weight loss programs, to name a few. Click [here](#) to learn more about these benefits.

Transportation for medical appointments and up to three roundtrip non-medical trips per month also are included in the plan, as is the Care Grant. Through the Care Grant, you can earn up to \$150 per year per child for services or supplies. Click [here](#) for more information.

Finally, the plan offers transition assistance through a one-time payment of up to \$500 for youth transitioning out of foster care at the age of 18 or out of extended foster care at age 21.

This plan has a lot to offer! If you have questions, please reach out to your dependency case manager or feel free to email me at lisa.mcbride@cckids.net.

Inside the Mission - *On Signing Day*

From time to time, we like to go behind the the scenes to introduce you to our families and to share more personal experiences. Today, we share a picture sent to us from a very proud mom in our community of care:

Tyler, pictured right, is a Vero Beach High School senior and another example of the success coming out of Communities Connected for Kids' system of care.



He was one of 10 Vero Beach High School football players who received scholarships during National Signing Day in February. He will continue his football career at North Central College in Illinois. His mother, Maria, sent us this picture and gave us permission to share it with you. Congratulations Tyler!

CCKids, Partners Celebrate Social Work Professionals this Month



Stuart - March is National Social Work Month, and CCKids is celebrating all those who dedicate their professional time to serving others with a month-long social media campaign and virtual round table.

The campaign, which began March 1 and is being shared throughout the state, features videos from social-work professionals who work in various parts of the child-welfare system. They include case managers, placement specialists and guardians ad litem, to name a few.

Lily Totten, pictured above, is featured today on [Facebook](#). She is a licensing specialist with Place of Hope, which is one of CCKids' child-placing agencies that help recruit, train and license foster parents. In her video, Lily shares a passage from the Bible that inspires her through challenging times.

Follow us all month long for more videos and insight into the minds and hearts of our social-services professionals. Then, join us at 7 p.m., March 25, for a live roundtable discussion about the work they do and their experiences providing services during a pandemic. The roundtable will be hosted via Zoom and livestreamed on [Facebook](#). Links will be published closer to the event.



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