



Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - April 21, 2021



PGA Village residents drop off donations during an April 20 drive-through event designed for COVID safety. The annual event - which usually includes a dinner and presentation - is hosted by members of the Knit Wits, a community knitting group that gathers to knit, socialize and donate to local causes.

We Are Up to the Challenge

CEO Reflects on Child Abuse Prevention Efforts

By Carol Deloach

St. Lucie West - April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and I am proud to report on the good work our community has done this past year to raise awareness for an epidemic that has plagued our children and



families for decades.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes we've all made to accommodate our work around it, our community has seen a decrease in the number of children coming into care as well as the rate by which those children are removed from home. That tells me that the programs and services we put into place to strengthen families and prevent deeper-end involvement are working and that we have remained

vigilant in keeping children safe.

Just last week, I read a report that shows our community is the third lowest in the state for removing children from home and the fifth lowest for the amount of time it takes to get children adopted.

Even more exciting, we are one of only four other Community Based Care agencies in the state to find permanency for children in less than 12 months.

We have room for improvement; we are also highest in the state for children placed out of removal county and fourth highest for those placed outside of the circuit. And of course, we still struggle with placing children in group care, albeit as a way to keep siblings together.

These are hurdles that we can and will clear. The work of child wellbeing is ongoing and as fluid as the socio-economic and environmental changes that impact the communities we serve.

Of course, change starts with awareness, which brings me back to Child Abuse Prevention Month. Take a moment during your busy day and give yourself a MANicure – paint one fingernail in prevention blue, and start a conversation with anyone curious enough to ask about how one in five children experience abuse.

Follow us throughout the month on social media, or come to our Drive-Through MANicure event during your lunch break on April 23. While you're there, ask for a tour of the new Children's Advocacy Center – a first for our area that I believe will have a significant impact on our system of care.

Last but not least, there is still time to sign up for the MANicure Movement Education Series, designed by our partner, Embrace Families, to prepare parents, educators, health providers, first responders and others to identify warning signals, intervene to offset abuse, and provide trauma-informed care.

Timely topics with esteemed speakers focus on root causes of child abuse and neglect, including: social media safety, addressing the opioid epidemic, and overcoming adverse childhood experiences. The next in the series is scheduled for 1 p.m., April 27.

Drive-By MANicure

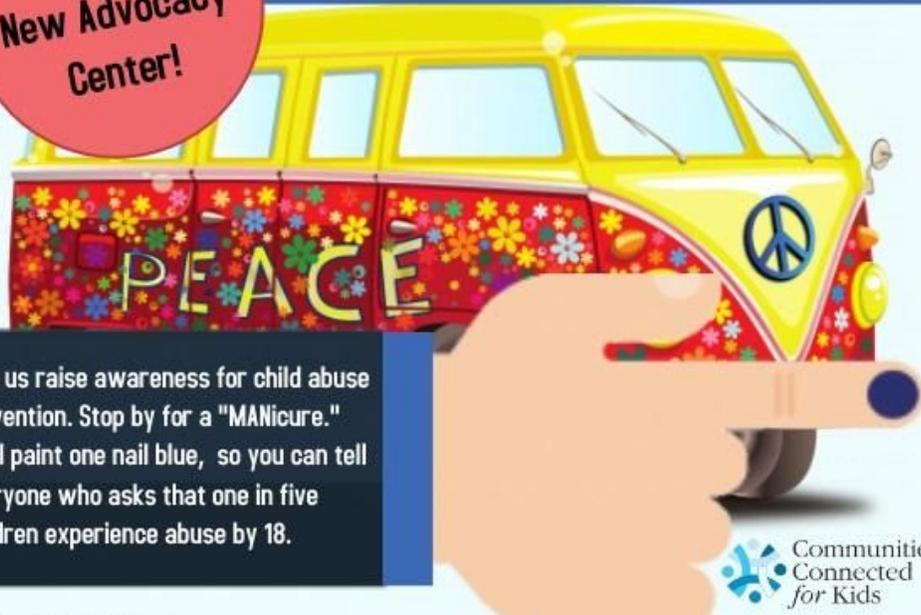
Friday, April 23

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In the parking lot of the new Children's Advocacy
Center - 8555 Commerce Centre Drive, St. Lucie West
(Barron Real Estate)

Tour the
New Advocacy
Center!

In partnership with the MANicure Movement and in
recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



Help us raise awareness for child abuse
prevention. Stop by for a "MANicure."
We'll paint one nail blue, so you can tell
everyone who asks that one in five
children experience abuse by 18.

Communities
Connected
for Kids

Do You Have Questions About Foster Care? We Have Answers!

By Jerra Wisecup

Port St. Lucie - You may have seen our ongoing foster-parent recruitment ad on Facebook or Instagram. You may have even clicked one of those ads and ended up on a website page intended to answer your most



pressing questions about becoming a foster parent.

But, if you're like me, you got to that page, read it and realized you suddenly have a lot MORE questions. What do you do?

Beginning May 18, Communities Connected for Kids will offer an informal, online information session where you can ask - yes, I said, "ask" a real live person any question about foster care without ever leaving your house. It's that simple - it's free, easy and, best of all, absolutely no pressure to commit.

Of course, Licensing and Caregiver Support Specialist Tricia Curl and I will be there to show you the next step if you decide you want to move forward. Our plans are still developing, but look for the sign-up link at cckids.net or on our social media channels in the coming weeks. In the meantime, if you'd like to be put on a list to receive a Zoom link to the May 18 session, email [Christina Kaiser](mailto:Christina.Kaiser).

Jerra Wisecup is part of the CCKids Licensing and Caregiver Support Team. She leads our agency's Quality Parenting Initiative, which is helping to improve relationships among caregivers, birth families and child-wellbeing professionals.



Level Yoga and Vero Elite Volleyball Academy recently hosted an underwear and diaper drive for CCKids families served in Indian River County. Level Yoga owner Amanda Steadman organized the drive with her daughter's volleyball team and invited CCKids Indian River County Manager Caryn Toole, shown

right, in for a photo opportunity.