



Communities Connected *for Kids*

Connections - June 2, 2021



CCKids won the statewide #1KFor1Kid registration challenge! Our community made up more than 25 percent of all registrations throughout the state. Many of those who registered, like team Rosenthal, Levy, Simon and Ryles, came out to CCKThePark to complete their 1K of activity and learn more about foster care on our interactive route. The event was so successful, plans are underway to make the event an annual community event. The event captured the imagination of local news crews, who filmed some of our staff. Check it out [here](#).

Where They Are Now: Did They Find Their Forever Families?

St. Lucie West – Their young faces are hopeful, and their voices – often quiet and sometimes barely more than a



whisper – speak a tale that is both universal and yet uniquely their own.

They are children looking for adoptive homes, and they have been appealing to prospective moms and dads every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. on WPEC’s News Channel 12 Forever Family segment.

Videos featuring 34 children have aired since the program began running local stories in 2018. Of those children, 20 have been matched, placed or adopted.

Most of those successes were the combined result of multiple recruitment efforts, including Forever Family, said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for Communities Connected for Kids, the organization that oversees the child welfare system in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

A 9-year-old boy named Da’Shawn is the only child so far whose adoption was the direct result of his Forever Family segment. His older sister, Mya, also was featured on the program and would have been adopted with him, but she chose to stay in foster care.

She is now having second thoughts and was featured in a new video produced earlier this spring.

“That’s just how it is with the older kids, sometimes,” said Lorrie Snodgrass, adoptions recruiter for Children’s Home Society, the nonprofit organization contracted by CCKids to provide adoption services. “It’s a big decision to make and we can’t make it for them.”

Mya’s story is not unique, Snodgrass said. Teenagers often are reluctant to give up connections to their biological families, or they’ve been in care long enough that they begin to feel they can make it on their own.

Many of them are tired of having every decision made for them by professionals and just want to turn 18 and leave the system – and their childhood – behind, she said.

That was the case for Elise, who was featured on the program last September.

“Elise had a family come forward after seeing her Forever Family video, but she recently decided she no longer wishes to be adopted by the family and wants to remain in foster care,” Snodgrass said.

Still, there are many successes to celebrate.

Amerion, a special needs boy featured in March 2020, recently was matched to an out-of-state family and is currently in the adoption process.

Despite cognitive delays, Amerion's speech has improved thanks to the efforts of his adoptive mother, who is a speech therapist. And he is participating in activities that the child-welfare professionals in his life could only dream of for him.

"Amerion's new family discovered his love of basketball, and most recently they purchased his first skateboard," Snodgrass said.

He also rides a school bus, and he sits next to his adoptive brother on the ride home every day, she said.

"For the first week, he was beaming from ear to ear and would proudly tell everyone he saw that he rode the bus," Snodgrass said.

For Snodgrass and the adoption specialists she works with, the unmeasurable value of the Forever Family project is its story-telling potential.

"It's one thing to read about a child available for adoption on paper and something else entirely to see the child in action," she said. "It really helps to paint a better picture of the child."

That was the case for Jonathan, a young boy with aspirations of becoming a fashion designer and someday traveling to Paris. Jonathan recently found his Forever Family after being featured on the show earlier this year.

His newly-matched family learned about Jonathan through the Heart Gallery adoption website and reached out to Snodgrass to learn more about him and the adoption process. The family did not see the initial airing, but Snodgrass emailed them Jonathan's Forever Family link.

The family responded, "Since you've sent this video, we've watched it multiple times and are even more excited to meet him." The family started their unsupervised visitations with Jonathan this spring.

And Joey, a 10 year-old boy from Okeechobee, whose feature aired last summer was officially adopted by his Forever Family in April.

"Like all recruitment – whether for foster parents or adoptive homes – it's hard to pinpoint one specific thing that leads to success," Kaiser said. "Rather, it's that gentle but constant reminder about what we need that gets the job done."

CCKids has renewed its contract with Forever Family for another year. You can watch the news segment every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. on [WPEC News Channel 12](#).

Congratulations Graduates!

CCKids and our Board of Directors want to congratulate all the young people in our community who graduated high school this spring - young people like Tyler Wrenn, who previously was featured in Connections when he made the local papers for National Signing Day.

Tyler graduated Vero Beach High School last month and is headed to North Central College in Illinois, where he will continue his football career.



We also are very proud of our six foster-care youth celebrating graduations this spring and of the Independent Living staff, teachers, families and caregivers who share that success.



Celebrate This Month With a Moment of Cheer

June is National Reunification Month, a time when we celebrate hard work, determination, redemption and forgiveness.

Often, that hard work includes months - sometimes years - of substance abuse and mental health treatment as well as ongoing therapy to learn, practice and pass down healthy coping skills.

Returning children to healthier, stronger and stable families is the goal of our community of care. Help us celebrate the 160 families who have been reunified this year by videotaping 2-5 seconds of yourself, your family or your team applauding or cheering. Email the clip to [Christina Kaiser](#) by June 15, and we'll edit it into one community wide celebration!



It's 2 a.m., and My Child is Sick *In This Month's, In the Clinic*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN

Port St. Lucie - Most of us have experienced the panic of having a child turn sick during the wee hours of the morning.

Should I take my child to the ER? Should I call the doctor? Where is the nearest place I can get care now? Will they accept my insurance?

If your child is having breathing difficulties, has bleeding that you cannot stop, has a broken bone, has bumped her head and acting differently or has seizures, go to the emergency room for care. They are best equipped to treat these conditions.

On the other hand, if your child is coughing, has a fever, is pulling at his ears, or has a sore throat, you have options! Sunshine Health members have around-the-clock access to the company's Nurse Advice Line. The contact number is: 855-463-4100.

Sunshine Health members also have access to Nemours Care Connect. This new service for kids, newborn to age 18, is free for Sunshine members and provides access to board-certified pediatricians around the clock via telehealth.

If you are not a Sunshine insurance member, Nemours Care Connect accepts other insurances and mobile payment for care. Visit [Nemours Care](#) for more information.



Anthony Dosio receives the Alice Gaskill Memorial Scholarship from the Exchange Club of the Treasure Coast. Anthony is the first to receive the award, named for a lifetime club member who dedicated her life to serving the Indian River County community. He graduated from Vero Beach High School last week and now heads to Orlando to continue his education in the fall. Here, he is pictured with Robin Dapp and Cassi Jones.