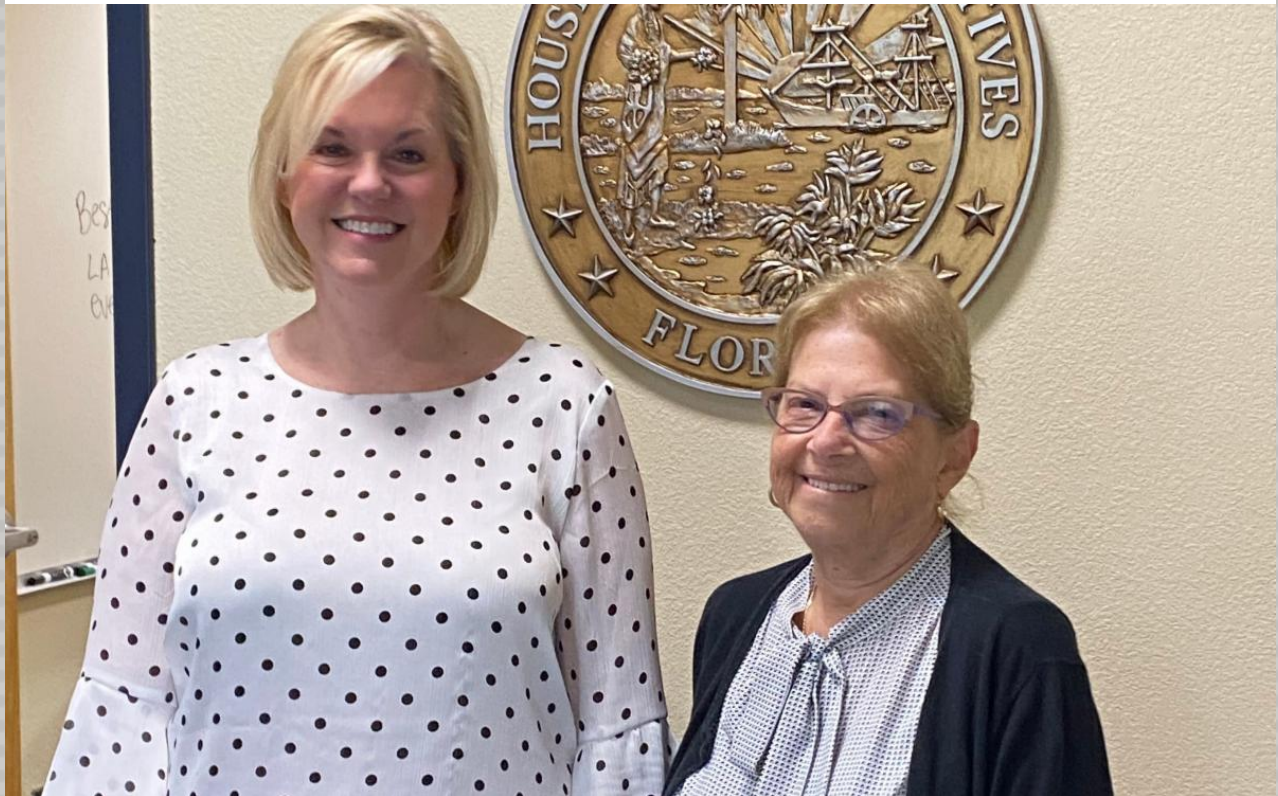




Connections - July 15, 2021



*It's a busy summer at CCKids. We're visiting with our local delegates, and preparing for the legislative session ahead. Here, Representative Dana Trabulsky meets with CEO Carol Deloach to discuss the state of child welfare in Okeechobee & the Treasure Coast.*

## CCKids Looks for the Helpers & Finds Them

**St. Lucie West** – Communities Connected for Kids welcomes [Cayuga](#) and [Education Advantage](#) to its child-welfare system this summer. The non-profit organizations are the latest to start recruiting, training and licensing foster families in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

"Foster-home recruitment continues to be a priority for us," said Christina Kaiser, director of community relations for [CCKids](#), the organization that oversee child-welfare services in Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee counties. "Each of our licensing agencies brings something unique to the table, which is important when you're trying to engage families to care

for children from all cultures and communities."

Two of CCKids' recruiting agencies are faith-based and recruit from churches, while a third recruits from the general community.

The addition of Cayuga and Education Advantage will focus recruitment efforts for particular populations of children, specifically those in large sibling groups and harder-to-place children in need of enhanced services.

"Cayuga will focus on finding foster homes for children who, because of their trauma, have more behavior issues that makes them harder to place," CCKids Contract Director Andi Poli said. "And Education Advantage will focus their efforts of recruiting and licensing homes capable of taking larger sibling groups."

Targeted recruitment is among the latest efforts by CCKids to keep children out of group homes, which are an essential part of the system of care but not meant as an alternative to foster homes.

Approximately 270 children are in foster placements throughout Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast. Foster parents change lives and offer hope to children who have been removed from home due abuse or neglect. They play a significant role in helping families heal and reunite. For information about how you can become a foster parent, visit [www.ckkids.net](http://www.ckkids.net).

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## United Way to Send Hundreds of Children in Foster Care Back to School with Supplies



**Fort Pierce** – The United Way of St. Lucie County will once again donate 300 backpacks of school supplies to CCKids for children in care, continuing a decade-long partnership between the two organizations.

During ordinary years, CCKids earns this contribution by helping to collect supplies through the annual Stuff the Bus event, which has been postponed until 2022. But there is still a way to give back to the United Way of St. Lucie County this summer. Please consider volunteering for a two-hour shift at the Tools for Schools Back to School Bash, August 3-7. Much of the activity is indoors. Click [here](#) to sign up.

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Jessica Abadia

# We Care Wednesday

Find my story on Facebook  
[@connectedforkids](#)

[www.cckids.net](http://www.cckids.net)



## New Campaign Offers Window into the Work

**PORT ST. LUCIE** - Meet the staff behind CCKids' mission every week by following our #WeCareWednesday campaign on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). The campaign will spotlight a different member of staff each week as a way to better engage with the community we serve.

We kicked off the campaign last week with Jessica Abadia, an Intake & Operations coordinator who facilitates staffings (special meetings to determine or review a child's case plan) and the transfer of cases between the Department of Children and Families and case management staff in Indian River and Okeechobee counties.

Jessica was born in New Jersey, grew up in Miami and moved to the Treasure Coast in 2007. She received a bachelor of social work from Florida International University and my masters from Barry University.

"I thoroughly enjoy the work I do at Communities Connected for Kids," said the married mother of two teenagers. "Being an Intake & Operations Coordinator allows me to work across the board with case management and DCF staff as well as interact with parents and caregivers during the case transfer staffing.

"I enjoy being able to facilitate communication between all parties involved to ensure families receive accurate information and to help us better serve the families we work with. I look forward to continuing my work in child welfare for many years to come!"