



Connections - July 28, 2021



Communities Connected for Kids

# State of Our CHILDREN

JUNE 2020 TO JULY 2021

588 - 16% fewer - children were removed.

58% of those children were placed with relatives, a 3% increase.

20% fewer children lived in group care.

121 foster homes were recruited or retained, a 7% decrease.

167 children were adopted, representing a 10% increase over the annual goal.

*Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, CCKids ended its fiscal year with improvements and trends that continue to move in the right direction. Recruiting and licensing foster homes is always a challenge, but a recent spike in available beds gives us hope for the year to come.*

# Home-Cooked Meals, Delivering Medication, Helping Families Reunify. It's All in a Day's Work for These GEM Winners.

**St. Lucie West** – Communities Connected for Kids congratulates Rebecca Morgan and Stacey Wickett for winning the most recent Going the Extra Mile – or GEM – Award for excellence in serving children and families in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast. The duo won the award for the period spanning April through June.



The period marks the first time that a GEM award was also given to a local caregiver. Okeechobee foster parents Matt and Jenny Deyarmond received the award in the Topaz category, an expansion of the award added earlier this spring. The couple received the award for their dedication to co-parenting, a model that focuses on creating a relationship with a child's birth family.

Jenny and Matt Deyarmond are an example of what everyone in our system of care should aspire to be and support others to achieve, said Jamie Franks, another foster and adoptive parent who nominated the couple.

“Jenny has exemplified what it means for licensed foster parent to work in partnership with the family of children placed in their home,” Franks said. “Jenny worked to mentor the mother of a sibling group that her family previously cared for.

“She welcomed the mother into her home on a daily basis to help the family's bond continue to grow and flourish.

“Even after the family was reunified, she has continued to quietly shine her light and share her love with the family in ways that go well beyond what is expected or even understood by many.”



Wickett, a dependency program director in Indian River County, received the award in the Emerald Division, which covers case-management staff. She received it for her recent work in helping to find stable placement for a young person whose trauma was creating challenging behavior.

“Stacey embodies the tenets of servant leadership,” said CCKids Clinical Director Josie Kirchner, who nominated Wickett.

She spearheaded round-the-clock supervision for an 11 year-old-boy whose

trauma response made it difficult to place him in group or foster care. As challenging as this youth was to supervise and manage, Stacey continued to advocate and push forward the needs of the child and consider the generational trauma that impacted the family.

The program director also recently drove across the state to ensure that another child's medications were picked up, paid for and delivered while insurance issues were being resolved.

"Stacey doesn't hesitate to roll up her sleeves and work alongside her team," Kirchner said.

Morgan, a specialist in the Road to Success program and a former foster child served by CCKids, received the award in the Ruby Division, which recognizes the work of administrative and program staff.



Rebecca has first-hand experience of being a kid in the system, said colleague Margie Dotson and past GEM recipient. That experience gives her an edge of relatability with the young people she works with.

"Rebecca recently shared her experience with a young man she was working with, encouraging him to pursue his dreams and use the supports available to him," Dotson said. "But she also brought him home-cooked meals, bought him shoes, taught him valuable life skills, like taking his medication the right way."

CCKids' Board of Directors recognized Wickett and Morgan on a Zoom call during its July Board meeting. Each employee will receive a \$100 bonus and a plaque. The Deyarmonds will receive a personal congratulatory phone call from CCKids CEO Carol Deloach, along with a \$100 gift card.

We are happy to take nominations from the community. If you know a CCKids employee who has gone above and beyond, let us know. Click the link to the [nomination form](#).



## Back to School Means Vaccination - *In This Month's, In the Clinic*

By Lisa McBride, RN, BSN

It's that time of year again! Schools will be reopening. Do you know if your children have all their vaccinations in order to attend?

You can call your child's pediatrician to find out. While you're on the phone, go ahead and schedule your student's next well check!

If the office is not able to see your child prior to school opening, schedule the well visit and then can call your local community health department to schedule a vaccination visit. I've included the contact numbers and links below. Let's keep our children healthy and protected!

- [St. Lucie County Department of Health](#): (772) 462-3800
- [Okeechobee County Department of Health](#): (863) 462-5819
- [Indian River County Department of Health](#): (772) 794-7425
- [Martin County Department of Health](#): (772) 221-4000