



Connections - March 23, 2022



Take a Story Stroll this Mother's Day Weekend, Celebrate Foster Care

Port St. Lucie - Kick off your Mother's Day weekend this year at CCKids' 1K for Kids, from 8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, May 7, at Port St. Lucie's Hillmore Lake Park.

While you're there, take the Story Stroll, a 1K walk along a tree-lined trail dotted with the stories and videos of children and families of the local foster-care community.



It's all in celebration of National Foster Care Month, said Jerra Wisecup, Licensing and Caregiver Support Specialist for CCKids, the nonprofit organization that oversees the child-welfare community in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties.

"We want our community to know the children and families who make up foster care," Wisecup said. "Their stories are worth telling, and we think we've created the perfect interactive experience to share them."

The first 100 people to register for the walk will receive a free foster-care awareness tee-shirt the day of the event. And anyone interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent will have the opportunity to connect with a recruitment specialist.

The 1K Story Stroll is a little more than half a mile, but the total trail is 1.27 miles for those who want to keep going. Hillmore Park also offers a passive fitness station and two observation/fishing decks extending out over the lake.

If you're interested in signing up, please register by clicking the 1K for Kids banner on our website at www.ckkids.net or register directly [here](#).

Pictured above are CCKids staff beginning their stroll at last year's 1K for Kids.



Pictured above is CCKids IT Specialist Larry Olsen, who painted his nail for child abuse prevention a little early this year to help promote the MANicure challenge taking place next month.

MANicure Challenge Moves to Local Barber Shop

Port St. Lucie- What goes with a clean shave and a hot towel? A manicure of course!

CCKids – the organization that oversees the child-welfare community in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties – will celebrate National Child Abuse Prevention Month on Saturday, April 16, at Defoe’s Barber Shop in Port St. Lucie.

Owner Mike Defoe is partnering with CCKids to help increase awareness for child-abuse prevention. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., April 16, customers coming for a shave or haircut can also receive a special one-finger MANicure.

It's part of the statewide MANicure Movement - a multi-media campaign designed to highlight the fact that one in five children experience child abuse. Participants paint one fingernail blue, the color of child-abuse awareness, and then explain why when asked.

Men are especially encouraged to participate because people are more likely to ask why a man's fingernail is painted.

"That starts the conversation," said Christina Kaiser, community relations director for CCKids. "We want people to see that one blue nail and ask, 'why?'"

Other activities to celebrate the month include a social media campaign featuring high-profile leaders, like chiefs of police, sheriffs and local fire chiefs, taking the MANicure challenge and painting their pointer finger nails blue.

Follow us throughout the month on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to learn more about child-abuse prevention, or visit us at www.cckids.net.

Want to get involved? Take a selfie or video giving yourself a one-finger manicure - painted in any color blue - and email it to [Christina Kaiser](#). We'll post it as part of our celebration!



Well Visits & Milestones - In This Week's, *In the Clinic*

By **Lisa McBride, RN, BSN**
CCKids Nurse Care Coordinator

Happy March to you all!

The CDC-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has recently updated the developmental guidelines that your pediatrician uses to measure your child's progress in reaching growth milestones.

You have access to these as well (see the link below).

"Why do I have to go?" I'm sure as a parent/caregiver, you have heard this from your kids when getting them into the car for a pediatrician visit. There are many reasons to make sure from birth on that they receive well visits according to the recommended schedule: 3-5 days after birth, 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years and annually thereafter.

Regular visits allow you to ask questions and receive counseling and information around a variety of health topics to ensure proper growth and development.

Healthy habits are discussed—kids may have heard you say something 100 times, but then the pediatrician says it at a visit and all of a sudden it sticks! Health visits allow early identification of diseases/problems/issues—which with treatment, can prevent progression to chronic illnesses and lifelong health struggles.

Another reason to go is to teach personal health advocacy. Your child watches you while in the office and learns how to ask questions of the physician, how to speak up about their body, learn to care for their body and how to establish a working professional relationship with the physician.

Sometimes kids, especially teens, will share information with the physician that they may not share with us as parents. I know this may sting a little as a parent, but I'd rather them seek the help/answers to their health questions from a qualified professional than getting the information from peers or on the street.

Sunshine Health benefits cover well visits for your kids, so make sure to schedule with your favorite pediatrician!! (Please see the accompanying flyer).

[CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](#)

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Scheduling a well-child checkup has its benefits

A well-child checkup is one of the best ways to keep your child healthy. You should set up yearly appointments to keep your child current on:

- Scheduled vaccines
- Health screenings
- Overall preventive care



Well-child checkups

During a well-child checkup, the doctor will ask questions and observe your child to get a sense of their growth. The doctor might talk about:

- Growth and milestones
- Behavior at home
- Friendships
- Eating habits and exercise
- Safety tips
- Rewarding good behavior



As an added incentive, well-child checkups can also help you earn up to \$30 in Healthy Rewards.

Call your doctor today to keep the children in your care as healthy as possible.

Questions?

Call Member Services at 1-855-463-4100 (TTY 1-800-955-8770). We're here Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern. We can help you schedule appointments and find a ride.

SunshineHealth.com/CW

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Inside the Mission - *A Few Success Stories from Our Road to Success Program*

By Margie Dotson
Road to Success Specialist

St. Lucie West - Many of us begin each year with a New Year's resolution, and by this time, those resolutions are nearly forgotten - goals to eat better, lose weight, exercise more, travel, and so on.

But for many of our young adults in foster care, survival is the goal; living a normal life is the resolution. Sadly, a vast majority of the young adults we serve want to leave the system by any means necessary once they turn 18. Post-secondary education, vocational schools and certification is not always the primary focus despite our best efforts.



Free college and a financial stipend - offered to kids who grow up in the system - are not always enough of an incentive to stay on the educational track. Many of them attended so many different schools as teen-agers that they didn't always receive the tools or foundation needed to successfully navigate through early adulthood.

In other cases, obtaining immediate employment and securing stable housing is the priority. For these young adults, college or vocational school is something that they can do later. And we're here for them, too.

So, it is with great pride that we at Communities Connected for Kids boast an average 15 students a year in our post-secondary education program.

Here are just a few. Although they have each given permission to share their stories, we're using their initials to protect their privacy:

M.P. is an Alumni of our Road to Success and Post Educational Support & Services Program. She reached out to me because she wanted to let us know how much of an impact that this program has had on her life. She calls herself a "mature student" and, despite already graduating from college, decided to re-enroll and is currently a pre-law student pursuing a degree at Texas Southern University. She finished the fall 2021 semester with a 4.0 GPA. She is the mother of six and is signed with Page Parkes Modeling Agency.

T.R. has successfully completed his vocational certification in barbering from Indian River State College. He is also a proud father to his daughter.

A.F. has completed another semester with a perfect 4.0 GPA at Indian River State College and has transitioned to Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) in Tallahassee. She also participates in our Florida Youth Shine, a peer-driven advocacy group.

A.S. finished the fall semester with a 3.75 GPA also at Indian River State College.

T.W. is a student athlete at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, where

he plays football. His team played in the 2021 Stagg Bowl in for NCAA Division III National Championship. When time permits, he participates in both our youth advocacy groups with Florida Youth Shine and One Voice Impact.

I hope that these amazing accomplishments inspire others as much as they have inspired me.

Pictured above are the author, Margie Dotson, Tyler Wrenn and Rebecca Morgan during this year's Children's Week at the state capital. Margie and Rebecca are specialists in CCKids' Road to Success program. Morgan is a former youth in care.
