



Connections - June 8, 2022



## We're Lifting Families Together This Month During Reunification Month

About 130 children in Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast went home to stronger, healthier families this past year after time apart for a variety of reasons – most commonly substance-abuse or mental-health needs that can be overcome through local resources and a strong support system.

Children belong with families, said Jerra Wisecup, licensing and caregiver support specialist. We celebrate our foster families who give children temporary respite and our adoptive families who offer permanency.

But it's a special cause for celebration when we can return children to their own homes, she said. That's what we celebrate in June, during National Reunification Month.

It's not easy, Wisecup said. Entering foster care is a traumatizing experience for everyone; for parents, it means entering a complicated and confusing

system, not knowing what's ahead or even if they'll see their children again.

“Most families recognize that they need the services – the help – we offer,” she said. “They work hard and they get through it, stronger, healthier and with better coping skills that make them better parents.”

National Reunification Month recognizes those efforts, as well as the people and institutions supporting the reunification journey.



















The community can get involved by interacting with the CCKids Action Calendar, an initiative started two years ago to connect the local community with clients, case managers, guardians, caregivers and everyone involved with getting kids home to their families.

The calendar offers a different way to get involved each day– for example, sending a text message of encouragement to a mom trying to maintain sobriety or a family support worker who drives a child across the state so she can visit with siblings.

We've included the calendar below. Just click anywhere on the calendar to submit a message of hope. We'll get it to the right people!

And don't forget to follow our Lifting Families Together campaign on social media. Throughout the month, we will recognize our reunification heroes – case managers, substance abuse and mental-health providers and others in the community who helped make reunification possible for the estimated NUMBER children going home this month.

With your help, we are lifting families together.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Use these hashtags daily, throughout the month of June to help raise awareness! #CelebrateReunification #ReunificationMonth #CelebrateFamily			<b>1</b> Spread the word about Reunification Month by posting on your social media pages. #CelebrateReunification #ReunificationMonth #CelebrateFamily	<b>2</b>  Call/Text a birth parent some words of encouragement!	<b>3</b> Text a birth parent, highlighting some of the ways you have seen them change that are not necessarily case plan tasks.	<b>4</b> Encourage a birth parent to record themselves reading a book for their child(ren) and play it for the child(ren) to hear/see.
<b>5</b> Send a "Thank You" note, email, or ecard to a CLS Attorney. 	<b>6</b> Reach out to a Caregiver and ask what you can do to help him/her today.	<b>7</b> Help encourage a new coparenting relationship by connecting a caregiver and birth parent on Zoom or FaceTime.	<b>8</b> Reach out to a Birth Parent and ask what you can do to help him or her today. 	<b>9</b>  Text your favorite motivational quote/poem to a Child Protective Investigator or Case Manager.	<b>10</b> Text a transporter, "Thank you for making sure our kids can maintain important relationships." 	<b>11</b> Email a supervisor thanking them for what they do. 
<b>12</b> Use your social media to post why celebrating reunification is important to YOU! #CelebrateReunification #ReunificationMonth #CelebrateFamily	<b>13</b> Reach out to a Case Manager and ask what you can do to help him/her today. 	<b>14</b> <b>THANK YOU</b> Text a case manager, "Thank you for the late nights and long hours that you put in for our kids!"	<b>15</b> Make a birth parent smile! Send a funny quote or joke. 	<b>16</b> Send a birth parent artwork (drawing, painting, poem) completed by his/her child. 	<b>17</b> Text a Child Protective Investigator, "Thank you for working hard to keep our children safe."	<b>18</b> Ask a birth parent to send a family photo for their child(ren) to see whenever feeling homesick. 
<b>19 Father's Day!</b> Send a birth father a photo of his child(ren). 	<b>20</b> Text a smiley face emoticon to a Case Manager (no extra words needed). 	<b>21</b> Call a GAL, tell them how much you appreciate his/her partnership!	<b>22</b> Make a caregiver smile! Send a funny photo or meme. 	<b>23</b> Email a Supervisor, Program Director, and/or County Manager about the GREAT job one of their staff is doing.	<b>24</b> Text a birth parent a smiley or silly face photo of his/her child(ren). 	<b>25</b> Send a "Thank You" note, email, or ecard to a therapist, or other service provider.
<b>26</b> Text a caregiver, "Thank you for the many daily sacrifices that you make for our kids."	<b>27</b> Email a Placement/Licensing Specialist or Kinship Coordinator and let them know they are appreciated.	<b>28</b> Reach out to a teen in foster care and compliment them on one of the things he/she does best.	<b>29</b> Text a birth mother a photo of her child(ren). 	<b>30</b> Share our Moment of Cheer video from the <a href="#">CCKIDS Facebook page</a> and <b>CELEBRATE</b> reunification with us!	Feel free to post your <b>OWN</b> moment of cheer on our CCKIDS Facebook page on <b>June 30!</b>	



## Community Comes Together to Get Formula to Young Mom and Baby

**By Christina Kaiser** - For many of us, the days of nursing or heating baby formula are long gone. And so it may be too easy for us to listen to the news about our nation's formula shortage and dismiss it - maybe subconsciously - as someone else's problem.

I'm including myself in this supposition.

Fortunately, that is not the case for one young mom whose desperate cries for help were heard by someone paying attention.

"The village came through!"



I received that text last Thursday from CCKids Road to Success Specialist Margie Dotson, who - together with the rest of the Road to Success team - were running from place to place collecting donations of baby formula. She called to let me know that a young mother receiving services in our community of care was desperately searching for ways to feed her child.

I thought she needed help finding formula. It turns out, she just wanted me to thank a community that had already responded- every person reading this newsletter who has ever helped another member of our village.

That is indeed what we are. Because we're a village, we can't afford to simply tune out the news that doesn't affect us. So for every one who pays attention to the needs of others, and on behalf of CCKids, I want to say, "thank you."

***Thank you to Margie for being the first villager to respond.***

She jumped immediately into action, rescheduled her priorities for the day and contacted everyone she knew could help.

"Her baby was crying in the background, and she told me that she only had one can of formula left," Margie said about the young mom, whose name is Kayla, and who allowed us to use the pictures above.

***Thank you to the Treasure Coast Foster Closet.***

Margie posted Kayla's need to the group's Facebook page. Within minutes, there were multiple offers of help.

***Thank you*** to Margie's wife, Michelle, and every other volunteer who put their day on hold to drive from community to community, collecting the donations.

***Thank you*** to every individual who contributed financially so that CCKids staff could purchase additional formula as it becomes available.

***Thank you*** to the St. Lucie County Foster Parent Association, its leaders Terri & Mark Young, and to Paul Nigro, Jamie Franks and everyone in the Guardian ad Litem program who helped spread the word to keep the donation of formula coming, even beyond one mom's needs.

Because of their engagement and shares on social media, CCKids is building a small collection of formula to meet the next emergencies.

No matter where we fall along the spectrum of parenthood and child-rearing, we must never forget that we are part of a community. Even when our children are grown and out of the house, it's important to remember that there are those who still need help, whether it's a can of formula, a lift to the store or an offer of to babysit.

After all, the health of our village requires a lifelong dedication of care from all villagers.

## Kudos from a Caregiver - In "*Behind the Mission*"



*Occasionally, we like to go behind the curtain for an insider's view of our organization. In this case, we offer a picture of the support you can expect when you join our community of care as a licensed caregiver. It's a letter from a caregiver about one of our caregiver support specialists, Alicia Phillips:*

"I have to take a moment and let you know what an outstanding employee you have in Alicia Phillips. I'm going to guess I'm not the first to tell you this about Alicia.

"As I'm sure you are aware, this process of getting licensed is a lot, considering the other demands of having an infant and Department of Children and Families requirements.

"From my very first conversation with Alicia, I loved her! She has the ability to combine her professionalism along with an amazing, friendly personal touch. Because of this, I was willing to move forward with the licensing and additional assistance for... (my child in care). Alicia was right there to assist me in any and every way she could; truly going above and beyond... I couldn't have done this without her."

***Editor's Note:*** *The caregiver also expressed gratitude to Alicia's supervisor, Caitlin Hassan, for backing her up and making her assistance possible.*