



November 2023

Roundtable Review

Message from our CEO

Greetings,

This year President Biden proclaimed November as National Adoption Month. Though the numbers are trending down the past few years, at the end of 2021, there were close to 400,000 children in foster care. According to the Annie E. Casey Kids County Data, Florida alone has over 23,000 children in foster care, placing our great state in the top 15 states in need.

Now more than ever, we need to raise awareness of the need for more families to provide a safe and loving home to so many vulnerable youth. Some of the top reasons for youth ending up in foster care are neglect, parental illness or disability, physical or emotional abuse, abandonment, parent incarceration, family dysfunction and/or acute stress, and absent parenting. Most children are resilient and can recover from this unfortunate circumstance by being placed in a stable, safe, and loving home.

Benefits to the adopted child is that they are placed with families who have completed a home study process that ensures the child has a stable loving home, they grow up with opportunities they may not otherwise have experienced like traveling and going to college, and most importantly they have better health, more attention from parents, and improved school performance. Benefits to the adoptive parents are that it enables them to become parents when they may not have been able to be and can bring them a rewarding opportunity to raise a child or children and provide them with a loving stable home.

If this message speaks to you, think about it this month, during the month of Thanksgiving. Consider contacting the Department of Children and Families, Children’s Home Society, 4 Kids Treasure Coast, or other licensed adoption agencies that serve the Treasure Coast. Imagine how thankful a young child or teen would be to have a forever home with you and the opportunity to be successful. Adoptive parents can truly “stand in the paint” and be a Kids at Hope Treasurer Hunter who believes that - All children are capable of success, NO EXCEPTIONS!

Teresa Bishop
Chief Executive Officer



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Special Dates:

- Adoption Awareness Month
- Military Family Appreciation Month
- National Homeless Youth Awareness Month
- American Diabetes Month
- Veterans Day 11/11
- World Kindness Day 11/13
- American Education Week 11/13-17
- National Parental Involvement Day 11/16
- Children’s Grief Awareness Day 11/16
- Family Volunteer Day 11/18
- Random Acts of Kindness Friday 11/24
- Thanksgiving 11/23

The Importance of Proclamations – Not Just Symbolic Gestures



The issuing of Proclamations is a tradition that is granted by local governments to people, organizations, and causes. This year, for the first time, all three local governments - the City of Port St. Lucie, the City of Fort Pierce, and St. Lucie County issued a Proclamation for Red Ribbon Week, October 23 – 31st, 2023. All three encouraged residents to participate in drug prevention education and awareness activities during the week and throughout the year to make a visible statement that we are strongly committed to a drug free lifestyle. Drug Free St. Lucie is very happy to have the support of our local government officials, who are committed to promoting and supporting policies that contribute to the health and wellness of our citizens, resident, and visitors. (see photos next page)

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, alcohol and drug abuse are particularly damaging to one of our most valuable resources, our children, and affects individuals, families, and communities across the nation; and,

WHEREAS, it is imperative that visible, unified efforts by community members be launched to prevent alcohol and drug abuse; and,

WHEREAS, it is the goal of Red Ribbon Week to involve families, schools, healthcare providers, businesses, religious institutions, law enforcement agencies, government, media, community-based organizations and service organizations in all aspects of this campaign, and establish an atmosphere that supports awareness, education and on-going initiatives to prevent alcohol and drug abuse; and,

WHEREAS, the Red Ribbon Week Campaign will be celebrated in communities across the nation between October 23-31, 2023; and,

WHEREAS, businesses, government, law enforcement agencies, media, health care providers, religious institutions, schools, parents, and other community-based organizations and services, will demonstrate their commitment to Drug-Free life styles, by wearing red ribbons and participating in drug prevention awareness and education activities.





Photos (L-R): **St. Lucie County:** Commissioners— Larry Leet, Chris Dzadovsky, Cathy Townsend, Linda Bartz, and Jamie Fowler, w/Casey Wood, DFSL Chair, and Jovil Wharton, DFSL Project Coordinator. **City of Port St. Lucie:** - Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan, Councilman Luis Bonna, Jovil Wharton, Mayor Shannon Martin, Vice-Mayor/Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo, and Councilman David Pickett; **City of Fort Pierce:** Jovil Wharton, Mayor Linda Hudson, and Casey Wood.



DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day takes place twice annually, on the last Saturday in April, and in October during Red Ribbon Week to encourage the public to remove unneeded medications from their homes as a measure of preventing medication misuse and opioid addiction from ever starting.

Drug Free St. Lucie (DFSL) teamed up with Jackson Drugs and the Fort Pierce Police Department to host a Drug Take Back Day event on Saturday, October 28th, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. **Through collaborative efforts, DFSL collected 157 pounds of prescription medication for safe disposal.**

Do you know what to do with your unused or expired medication?

Proper Use:

- * Always take your medications exactly as directed by your doctor.
- * Do not take medication from someone else or share your medication with others.
- * Be open with your doctor/pharmacist about all medications you are taking, even over-the-counter medications.

Proper Disposal:

- * Unused prescription drugs thrown in the trash can be retrieved and abused or illegally sold.
- * Unused drugs that are flushed contaminate the water supply.
- * Check your local pharmacy to find out if they collect expired prescription and nonprescription medications.

Proper Storage:

- * Secure your medication from children and pets.
- * Take regular inventory of your medicine to make sure nothing is missing.
- * Spread the word and encourage family and friends to take a stand against prescription drug abuse.



If you missed this Drug Take Back Day event, use the collection site locator [Take Back Day \(dea.gov\)](https://www.dea.gov) to locate the closest authorized collector for year-round disposal.





Drug Free St. Lucie Annual Meeting & Champions of Prevention Award Ceremony

With the objectives of increasing participation in St. Lucie County's youth substance use prevention efforts across different sectors through the promotion of coalition initiatives and opportunities to collaborate, and for coalition, community members and stakeholders to gain knowledge and skills for youth substance use prevention, Drug Free St. Lucie hosted its first Annual Meeting and Champions of Prevention Awards.

With over seventy in attendance, Drug Free St. Lucie recognized the outstanding contributions of six (6) community sector representatives during its Champions of Prevention Awards Ceremony.

Our Champions of Prevention are:

- ◆ **Schools: Stacey Cason, Program Specialist, Student Services, St. Lucie County Public Schools**
- ◆ **Youth Serving Organizations: Darcy McFolley, IGNITE Youth Alliance, Intervention & Outreach Coordinator**
- ◆ **Law Enforcement: William Christmas, Correctional Probation Senior Officer, Circuit 19, Florida Department of Corrections**
- ◆ **Organizations Involved in Reducing Substance Abuse: Ann Posey, CEO, Tykes and Teens**
- ◆ **Civic Organizations: Alicia Rolle, Sexual Assault Prevention Educator, Sexual Assault Program of the Treasure Coast**
- ◆ **Healthcare Organizations: Whole Family Health Center**



Thank you for contributing to Drug Free St. Lucie's Mission: *To cultivate a community that supports a substance free lifestyle and well - being in youth through advocacy and community collaboration.*



Teresa Bishop, Roundtable CEO, Casey Wood, DFSL Chair, and Jovil Wharton, DFSL Project Coordinator, present the awards to the Champions of Prevention Winners!



Stacey Cason, St. Lucie Public Schools



William Christmas, Department of Corrections



Darcy McFoley, IGNITE Youth Alliance



Presenters/Trainers: Christine Stilwell and Dr. Hayden Center, Jr. - Opioid Response Network



Alicia Rolle, Sexual Assault Program of the Treasure Coast



Anne Posey and Cassey Chang, Tykes & Teens





Youth Leaders Addressing Teen Mental Health and Substance Abuse in St. Lucie County!

This October, Youth Leadership St. Lucie’s (YLSL) meetings and community service projects focused on two primary themes: teen mental health and teen substance use prevention. At the start of this month, our youth leaders began production on their teen mental health PSA. YLSL members researched statistics about teen mental health, including rates of suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression prevalent among teens. According to the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, the 2022 statistics in St. Lucie County regarding teen mental health were staggering. In surveyed youth between the ages of 10-17, 56.8% of females and 30.9% of males reported feeling depressed or sad most days in the past 12 months; and 46.9% of females and 22.5% of males surveyed reported that in the past 12 months they had thought about committing suicide. YLSL members spoke candidly about their concerns about teen mental health and their peers, discussing the stigma that surrounds mental health issues, feeling unheard and not taken seriously when asking for help, and the struggle that exists in asking for help in the first place.

During the planning stages of producing their teen mental health PSA, YLSL members combined the statistical facts with personal accounts and experiences. They recorded voiceovers addressing the prevalence of teen mental health issues, how to be supportive of friends and peers struggling with mental health issues, positive coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety, and information about local resources for teens struggling with their mental health.

Drug Free St. Lucie’s (DFSL) Project Coordinator Jovil Wharton spoke to YLSL members about substance use disorders and asked for their feedback on which risky behaviors they have seen in their own schools. YLSL members reported that the use of vaping devices is very prevalent on their school campuses. They also discussed how this issue is being addressed on their school campuses, and what changes they would like to see happen.

In coordination with Drug Free St. Lucie Project Coordinator, Jovil Wharton, the youth are further educating themselves in order to be part of the solution to preventing substance misuse among teens in our community. YLSL members, Vice-Chair Amani Mohd and Evan Sierra participated in a DEA Drug Takeback Day with Drug Free St. Lucie at Jackson Drugs in Fort Pierce. 157 pounds of prescription drugs were collected and safely disposed of by the Fort Pierce Police Department. In addition, YLSL Vice-Chair Amani Mohd participated in DFSL’s Sticker Shock campaign at Sam’s Food Mart in Fort Pierce. Amani Mohd and Jovil Wharton placed stickers designed by a YLSL member on bottles of alcohol. The Sticker Shock campaign is utilized to inform shoppers that purchasing alcohol for anyone under the age of 21 is illegal and will result in hefty fines and even jail time.



DEA Drug Take Back Day: FPPD Officer Jorge Goz, YLSL member Evan Sierra, Amanda DeMan, Kids at Hope School & Comm. Liaison, Natasha Ramlagan, President Jackson Drugs, and DFSL Project Coordinator, Jovil Wharton



DFSL Sticker Shock Campaign: Amani Mohd, YLSL Vice Chair, and Jovil Wharton, Drug Free St. Lucie, Project Coordinator

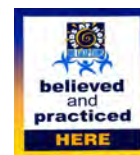
All Bulldogs Are Capable Of Success, NO EXCEPTIONS!



Forest Grove Middle School was awarded the first new 4' x 4' Kids at Hope vinyl wrap sign. Principal Bobo, Executive Director of Schools, Mrs. Miller-Buchanan, and Asst. Principal Dashan Person marveled as the sign was revealed. The new KAH signs are created using the school colors and mascot while promoting the language of Kids at Hope, “All BULLDOGS ARE CAPABLE OF SUCCESS, NO EXCEPTIONS!” The schools are encouraged to continue to recite the Kids at Hope pledge and replace the word “kids” with the school mascot. The purpose of these new signs is to increase school pride and enhance the KAH culture on campuses. Savanna Ridge Elementary also received a new KAH sign to recognize the Kids at Hope culture evident on their campus! The KAH team is looking for the next school to award a sign. If the practices and beliefs of Kids at Hope are evident on your campus, you could be the next recipient!



FOREST GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL



Our Funders:



Our Board Members

- ◆ Terissa Aronson, St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Tom Bakkedahl, 19th Judicial Circuit—State Attorney
- ◆ Rosetta Bartell, Housing Authority of Fort Pierce
- ◆ Linda Bartz, Board of County Commissioners
- ◆ Brian Bauer, CareerSource Research Coast
- ◆ Ann Berner, SE FL Behavioral Health Network
- ◆ Richard Del Toro, Jr., Port St. Lucie Police Department
- ◆ Sean Boyle, Children’s Services Council
- ◆ Joseph Cracchiola, Department of Corrections
- ◆ Carol Deloach, Communities Connected for Kids
- ◆ Thomas Epsky, United Way of St. Lucie & Okeechobee
- ◆ Sonya Gabriel, Steering Committee Chair
- ◆ Arnold Gaines, City of Fort Pierce
- ◆ Diane Hopley-Burney, Fort Pierce Police Department
- ◆ Michael Linn, 19th Judicial Circuit-Judge
- ◆ Diamond R. Litty, 19th Judicial Circuit—Public Defender
- ◆ Tony Loupe, Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie County
- ◆ Robert McPartlan, Department of Children and Families
- ◆ Troy Norman, St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office
- ◆ Heather Parker, Guardian ad Litem
- ◆ Nathan Peterson, Department of Juvenile Justice
- ◆ David Pickett, City of Port St. Lucie
- ◆ Dr. Jonathan Prince, St. Lucie Public Schools
- ◆ Jeff Lee, St. Lucie County Fire District
- ◆ Clint Sperber, FL Health Department - St. Lucie County
- ◆ Peter Tesch, Economic Development Council
- ◆ Dana Trabulsky, State Representative
- ◆ Andrew Treadwell, Indian River State College
- ◆ Lisa von Seelen, Healthy Start Coalition of St. Lucie County

Roundtable of St. Lucie County, Inc.

Our Mission:

To sustain a team of county and business leaders who mobilize resources to improve the education, health, safety, nutrition and care of all children in St. Lucie County.

Our Vision:

We envision a community where county leaders, businesses and residents are united to provide all children of St. Lucie County the resources they need to thrive, be successful and achieve their full potential.

2023-24 Executive Committee

CHAIR

Tony Loupe, Early Learning Coalition

VICE-CHAIR

Heather Parker, Guardian ad Litem

SECRETARY

Bob McPartlan, Department of Children and Families

TREASURER

Ann Berner, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network

PAST CHAIR

Lisa von Seelen, Healthy Start Coalition of St. Lucie County

STEERING COMMITTEE

Sonya Gabriel, Florida Health Department - St. Lucie

AT LARGE

Carol Deloach, Communities Connected for Kids

www.RoundtableSLC.org

Roundtable of St. Lucie County, Inc.

546 NW University Blvd., Suite 204
Port St. Lucie, FL 34986
Phone: 772-871-5880
Follow us on Facebook @RoundtableSLC

For questions or to subscribe to our Newsletter:
DEspinosa@RoundtableSLC.org



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE:

Teresa Bishop, Chief Executive Officer

TBishop@RoundtableSLC.org

Dana Espinosa, Operations Manager

DEspinosa@RoundtableSLC.org

OUR INITIATIVES:

IGNITE Youth Alliance—(772) 448-5712

- ◆ Darcy McFolley, Intervention & Outreach Coordinator
- ◆ Marcus Mills, Outreach Supervisor

Kids at Hope & Youth Leadership St. Lucie

- ◆ Kevin Singletary, Project Coordinator
KSingletary@RoundtableSLC.org
- ◆ Amanda DeMan, School & Community Liaison
ADeMan@RoundtableSLC.org

Drug Free St. Lucie

- ◆ C. Jovil Wharton, Project Coordinator
JWharton@RoundtableSLC.org

