



April 2025

Roundtable Review

Message from our CEO

Greetings,

April showers bring May flowers, and just like flowers, the children in our community need care and support to thrive. Our *Kids at Hope* tagline reminds us: “*All children are capable of success—no exceptions!*” This includes every child, in all their uniqueness.

This month, as we observe Autism Acceptance Month, let’s turn our attention to the autistic children in our community—our unique and beautiful “flowers” who deserve the right environment to flourish. With the right support for them and their families, they will grow strong and vibrant, enriching our shared garden.

As a grandparent and friend to many families with autistic children, I’ve seen both the joys and challenges they experience. Raising a child on the spectrum requires patience, dedication, and—most importantly—a community that understands and embraces them. It’s not enough to simply notice these children; we must be intentional about creating spaces where they are truly included—at school, in our neighborhoods, in businesses, and in places of worship.

I think of a friend who hesitates to attend church, afraid of judgment because her child blooms differently. Too many parents share this fear—that their children will not be accepted, that they will be pushed to the margins instead of growing alongside their peers. But the truth is, we all grow best in community.

This month is not just about awareness; it’s a call to action. Let’s educate, advocate, and open doors for meaningful inclusion. Let’s stand together and declare: *All flowers are capable of success—no exceptions!* By nurturing every child, we strengthen the soil of our community and ensure that *all* can grow.

So bring on the showers—because together, we’re growing something beautiful.

Teresa Bishop

Chief Executive Officer



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Special Dates:

- April Fool’s Day 4/1
- National Burrito Day 4/3
- National Sibling Day 4/10
- National Only Child Day 4/12
- Wear Pajamas to Work Day 4/16
- Easter 4/20
- Earth Day 4/22
- World Book Day 4/23

H.Y.P.E Takes Tallahassee!

The H.Y.P.E Youth Coalition is using their voices and advocacy skills to make real positive change happen! During Spring Break 2025, six (6) of our coalition youth, including two (2) Youth Peer Advisors, two (2) high school coalition members, and two (2) middle school coalition members traveled to Tallahassee, thanks to the generosity of State Representative Dana Trabulsy.

Youth voices are essential in driving change. Often, decisions are made that directly impact the youth without considering the youth perspective. Our youth were given the opportunity to speak with thirteen Florida State Legislators to ask questions and advocate for themselves and their peers on issues which impact them.

These meetings were essential for the H.Y.P.E youth to continue to develop their understanding of the legislative process, and even inspired legislators to consider the youth perspective in future legislation.



Representative Dana Trabulsy gave H.Y.P.E youth a private tour of the Florida Capitol and the House of Representatives Chamber.



(Left to right) Kids at Hope Training Coordinator, Kevin Singletary, H.Y.P.E Youth Coalition Members and H.Y.P.E Lead Advisor, Amanda DeMan, pictured with Representative Robin Bartleman (center).



H.Y.P.E Youth Coalition Members meet with Representative Adam Anderson.

Kids At Hope On The Move



The Kids at Hope team had the privilege of honoring two Treasure Hunters who have made a major impact in the lives of their students and community. The recipients of the Kids at Hope "10 Awards" were Assistant Principal, Natasha Santoro, at Fort Pierce Central High School and Whitney Witherow, a Fifth Grade Teacher at Northport K-8 School.

Assistant Principal Santoro is instrumental in providing opportunities for the Kids at Hope team and H.Y.P.E Advisors to work with their staff and students. Recently, the Kids at Hope team provided a KAH Refresher Training for 116 staff members at Fort Pierce Central High School. Principal Gardner and Assistant Principal Santoro encouraged their staff to build meaningful relationships with their students.

The influence of Ms. Witherow is seen throughout the campus at Northport K-8. She sponsors several clubs, including H.Y.P.E, to provide students with opportunities to participate in positive extracurricular activities. Students of all grade levels embrace her no-nonsense approach to education and life.

These educators take to heart the commitment of a Treasure Hunter to search for all the skills, talents, and intelligence that exist in all children and youth. They exemplify the true definition of having a meaningful and sustainable relationship with their students. Reciting the Treasure Hunter Pledge is one thing, but living it daily makes Assistant Principal Santoro and Ms. Witherow priceless Treasure Hunters.



Assistant Principal Natasha Santoro, Fort Pierce Central High School



Whitney Witherow, Fifth Grade Teacher, Northport K-8 School



Celebrating Autism Awareness Month

April is **National Autism Awareness Month**, and we're shining a spotlight on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to promote understanding, empathy, and support for individuals on the autism spectrum in St. Lucie County. While we recognize the importance of supporting individuals with a range of mental health diagnoses and developmental differences, this month's observance allows us to focus on raising awareness of ASD and encouraging our community to embrace neurodiversity. ASD affects 1 in 36 children in the U.S.¹, and we can all play a role in fostering a more compassionate community.

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

ASD is a developmental disorder that affects communication, behavior, and how individuals perceive and interact with the world. Autism exists on a spectrum, meaning the experiences, strengths, and challenges of individuals with autism vary widely. This month, let's move beyond awareness and focus on building more connected, engaged, and nurturing environments.

Mental Health Tips

Supporting the mental and emotional well-being of individuals with developmental differences benefits the entire community. Here are some sensory-friendly strategies to create safe, supportive spaces:

- **Design a Calm Space:** Offer a quiet, low-stimulation area where someone can decompress when feeling overwhelmed.
- **Use Visual Supports:** Tools like visual schedules, picture charts, or symbol cards can ease anxiety and enhance communication.
- **Encourage Breaks:** Simple sensory breaks, like stretching, deep breathing, or quiet time, help regulate emotions and reduce stress.

Local Resources and Programs for ASD

If you're seeking Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services to support your child's development, here are some local options available in the St. Lucie County area:

Collaborative Behavior Group

Utilizes a collaborative approach based on ABA principles to offer services designed to empower both children and their families to reach their full potential.

Website: www.cbgaba.com

Monarch Behavior Analysis LLC

Provides personalized ABA therapy services in the local area.

Website: <https://www.monarchbehavior.com/>

Behavior Basics, Inc.

Offers ABA Therapy in Port St. Lucie, Palm City, and Fort Pierce.

Website: <https://www.behaviorbasicsinc.com/aba-therapy/>

The ARC of St. Lucie County

Offers essential services for individuals with developmental differences, including educational programs, independent living support, and employment opportunities.

Website: www.arctreasurecoast.org

The Children's Advocacy Center of St. Lucie County

Provides counseling, case management, and advocacy services to children, including those with developmental needs.

Website: <https://gfnf4kids.org/cac-home/>

Tykes & Teens

Offers mental health services for children and teens, including trauma-informed care for those with sensory sensitivities or developmental challenges.

Website: <https://tykesandteens.org/>

Early Steps Treasure Coast

A free early intervention program for children under 3 experiencing developmental delays or disabilities.

Website: <https://floridaearlysteps.com/>

FAU CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities)

Offers training, resources, and tailored support to individuals with autism, their families, and professionals.

Website: <https://www.fau.edu/education/centersandprograms/card/>

As we continue to shine a light on Autism Awareness this month, remember that fostering a supportive, empathetic, and understanding environment is key to empowering individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Whether through the resources mentioned here, community events, or simply being more aware of the challenges others face, we can all play a role in creating positive change.

If you're seeking further information or wish to connect with one of the local programs mentioned, don't hesitate to reach out. Together, we can help build a stronger, more connected community for everyone.

For more information on the St. Lucie RISE Mental Health Collaborative, visit the initiative page at www.roundtableslc.org/stlucie_rise and follow us on Facebook @StLucieRISE.

Our Funders:



Our Board Members

- ◆ Terissa Aronson, St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Tom Bakkedahl, 19th Judicial Circuit—State Attorney
- ◆ Brian Bauer, CareerSource Research Coast
- ◆ Ann Berner, SE FL Behavioral Health Network
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- ◆ Clint Sperber, FL Health Department - St. Lucie County
- ◆ Peter Tesch, Economic Development Council
- ◆ Dana Trabulsy, State Representative
- ◆ Andrew Treadwell, Indian River State College
- ◆ Lisa von Seelen, Healthy Start Coalition of St. Lucie County
- ◆ Rosetta Washington, Fort Pierce Housing Authority
- ◆ TBD, 19th Judicial Circuit-Judge

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.

2024-25 Executive Committee

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Heather Parker, Guardian ad Litem

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AT LARGE

David Pickett, City of Port St. Lucie

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Drug Free St. Lucie

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