



November 2025

Roundtable Review

Message from our CEO

Greetings,

November is Youth Homelessness Outreach, Prevention, and Education (HOPE) Month

Every November, we pause to reflect on the incredible strength and resilience of young people who face one of life's most difficult challenges—homelessness. **Youth Homelessness Outreach, Prevention, and Education (HOPE) Month** reminds us that every child deserves stability, safety, and the opportunity to dream big.

Across the nation, more than **4.2 million young people** experience some form of homelessness each year. Here in **St. Lucie County Schools**, an estimated **1,000–1,200 students** are identified as experiencing homelessness. Behind each number is a story—a child who continues to show up, to learn, and to hope, even when the odds are stacked against them.

Homelessness can touch every part of a young person's life—school attendance, friendships, confidence, and well-being. Yet with caring adults and community support, these young people can thrive. Sometimes, what they need most is for someone to notice and care.

You can make a difference by learning to recognize the **signs of homelessness** in youth. Be alert if a student or young person:

- Often changes schools or mentions moving frequently.
- Appears tired, hungry, or without clean clothes or school supplies.
- Withdraws socially or struggles to concentrate.

Shares that they're "staying with friends," "in a car," or "have nowhere to go."

HOPE Month calls us to open our hearts and extend our hands—by supporting local shelters, volunteering, donating, and advocating for policies that protect vulnerable youth. Together, we can be the reason a young person feels seen, valued, and supported.

Next week, on **November 12th**, we will celebrate **National Kids at Hope Day**—a special time to remember that *all kids are capable of success, no exceptions*. Let's honor that pledge by standing with youth and families experiencing homelessness. Join us by wearing **blue and gold/yellow** on **National Kids at Hope Day** and reflecting on how we can each bring hope to a young person's life.

For more information on celebrating with us, see page 5 in this month's newsletter. Stand with us as we declare, **ALL** kids are capable of success—NO Exceptions!

Teresa Bishop

Chief Executive Officer



Inside this issue:

Kids at Hope	2
H.Y.P.E.....	3
National Kids at Hope Day.....	4-5
Mothers at Hope.....	6
Drug Free St. Lucie.....	6-7
St. Lucie RISE.....	8-9
Board Members	9
About Us	10

Special Dates:

- Nat'l Cinnamon Day 11/1
- Veterans Day 11/11
- Nat'l Kids at Hope Day 11/12
- Nat'l Seat Belt Day 11/14
- Mickey Mouse's Birthday 11/18
- Great American Smokeout 11/20
- Thanksgiving 11/27
- Nat'l Personal Space Day 11/30

Kids at Hope Shines in Community Engagements



October was a month of meaningful connection and impact for Kids at Hope, as the organization proudly participated in three dynamic community events that brought hope, learning, and inspiration to hundreds across St Lucie County.

The Kids at Hope Team sponsored a vendor's table at the ALPI Trunk or Treat event. Nearly 1,000 children and adults participated in the activities for a day of festive fun and family engagement. The Kids at Hope team featured the Wheel of Hope at the table to help celebrate the belief that "All children are capable of success, No Exceptions!"

Children and families enjoyed games, treats, and messages of encouragement, reinforcing the importance of community support and positive expectations. The event was a powerful reminder of how shared belief in youth and children can strengthen bonds and build trust.

The Kids at Hope Training Coordinator participated in Community Reading Day at Allapattah Flats K-8 School, where he read to Ms. Boyd's 3rd-grade classroom. The students were excited to ask questions and to share about their future hopes and dreams. It was a heartwarming moment that showcased the power of literacy and mentorship in shaping young lives.



On October 22, the Kids at Hope team co-facilitated a Community Training session to equip adults with the tools to support and believe in every child. The training brought together educators, parents, and community leaders to explore the Kids at Hope philosophy and practical strategies for fostering a culture of success. Participants left stating they are dedicated to being a "Treasure Hunter" for all children.

These events reflect Kids at Hope's unwavering commitment to building a community where every child is supported by caring adults and given the opportunity to thrive. St. Lucie County believes All Children are Capable of Success, NO EXCEPTIONS!



H.Y.P.E Empowers Peers During Red Ribbon Week and Beyond

Helping Youth Pursue Excellence (H.Y.P.E) has been busy this October, leading the way in youth prevention efforts and community involvement across St. Lucie County.

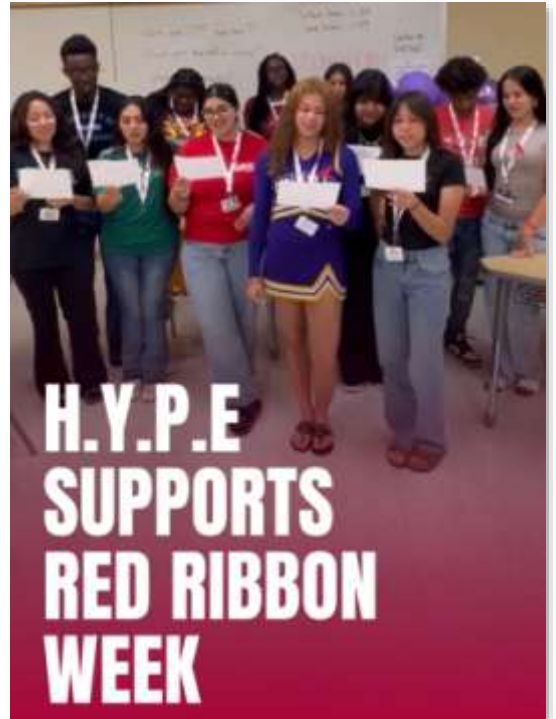
Senior H.Y.P.E members kicked off Red Ribbon Week by taking the official Red Ribbon Pledge to live drug free and encourage others to make healthy, positive choices. Youth also put their creativity to work by developing social media content to share prevention messages and inspire their peers to stay substance free.

Continuing their community engagement, Senior H.Y.P.E members joined Drug Free St. Lucie for the DEA's National Drug Take Back Day at Jackson Drugs. Youth helped educate the public on the importance of properly disposing of unused prescription medications and locking up medicines safely at home—key steps in preventing misuse and keeping families safe.

In addition to these outreach efforts, Senior H.Y.P.E also held elections for their 2025–2026 slate of officers, giving students the opportunity to take on leadership roles and strengthen their voice in the community.

Meanwhile, Junior H.Y.P.E kicked off their first meetings of the school year at Northport K-8. These younger leaders began planning their year of service projects and created morning announcements for Red Ribbon Week, spreading awareness about living drug free throughout their school.

From leadership elections to creative prevention messaging, H.Y.P.E youth continue to show that when young people are given the tools and trust to lead, they rise to the occasion—proving that the future of prevention is bright in St. Lucie County.



National Kids at Hope Day



"Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future," said former President John F. Kennedy. On November 12th, the Roundtable of St. Lucie County, along with its community partners and other organizations, celebrates and honors those who embody the universal principles of Kids at Hope in their daily lives.

The pledge, "All Children Are Capable of Success," serves as a daily affirmation for everyone working with children. Trained Treasure Hunters are dedicated to discovering the skills and talents of all children and youth. The Roundtable encourages the community to wear blue and yellow on November 12th to show support and to submit photos and/or videos. Entries can be submitted using the QR code on the flyer on page 5. The submission deadline is November 12th.

Since 2007, Kids at Hope has played a crucial role in the success of countless youth and children in St. Lucie County. The philosophy of shifting the perspective from "at risk" to "at hope" has enabled many adults to engage with and connect with youth and children in meaningful ways. The term "at risk" implies that a child's future is predetermined. In contrast, a child who is "at hope" recognizes the endless possibilities and limitless future ahead.





**Wear
blue and yellow!
to observe**

National Kids at Hope Day

"All Children are Capable of Success, NO EXCEPTIONS!"

November 12th

**Show your Time Traveler and
Treasure Hunter Spirit by
wearing blue and yellow!**



CONTEST

Share your photos and videos of
your kids at Hope Spirit for a
chance to win one of 10 great
prizes, courtesy of the St. Lucie
Education Foundation and Kona
Ice — supporting your school or
agency!

**DUE DATE
EXTENDED to:
November 12th,
upload here:**



**Winners will be announced
November 12th!**

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION
CONTACT US**

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www.RoundtableSLC.org/KidsAtHope

Roundtable
of St. Lucie County
LEADERS UNITED FOR CHILDREN

**Thank you to our contest
sponsors/funders:**





Mothers at Hope Kicks Off First Session at ALPI's George W. Truitt Family Services Center

This October, Mothers at Hope celebrated its first session of the year at ALPI's George W. Truitt Family Services Center—bringing together eight mothers for an afternoon of connection, relaxation, and empowerment.

The session offered participants a chance to take some much-deserved “me” time to unwind and focus on themselves. Thanks to free on-site childcare provided by ALPI, mothers were able to fully engage in the experience—shopping the program’s mini boutique stocked with essential items for both mothers and their little ones, and enjoying time to connect with others in a supportive environment.

Mothers also heard from two guest speakers representing local agencies committed to supporting families in our community. Sherry Sigfried from Treasure Coast Food Bank shared valuable information about food access and nutrition programs, while Tierra Smith from True Amor Foundation discussed her organization’s efforts to raise awareness of pediatric heart conditions.



We extend heartfelt thanks to our community partners who made this gathering possible— Jakkia Whitehead and Alisa Thornton from ALPI for their partnership and hospitality, and Kelly Santos from Children’s Services Council, whose warm presence helped ensure every mother in the room felt heard, supported, and understood.

The Mothers at Hope program continues to provide a welcoming space for mothers to recharge, connect with community resources, and know they are not alone.

National Drug Take Back Day Success

DRUG FREE
ST. LUCIE

On Saturday, October 25th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., our community came together for National Drug Take Back Day at Jackson Drugs. Thanks to everyone’s participation, we successfully collected 104.8 pounds of old and unused prescription medications—helping to keep our homes and community safer.

A special thank you to the Ft. Pierce Police Department, H.Y.P.E volunteers, the staff at Jackson Drugs, and all community members who supported this important event. Your efforts make a real difference in promoting a healthier, drug-free St. Lucie!



Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS) and Its Impact on Youth

As cannabis use among adolescents continues to rise, a little-known but increasingly prevalent condition is emerging in emergency departments across the country: **Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS)**. Which is being characterized by recurrent episodes of abdominal pains, severe nausea, and vomiting, Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome is an inconsistent reaction to chronic cannabis use that disproportionately affects youth who use marijuana frequently and over extended periods.

What is CHS?

CHS is a clinical syndrome with three distinct phases:

- **Prodromal Phase:** Early morning nausea, abdominal discomfort, and fear of vomiting. Many youth continue cannabis use during this phase, mistakenly believing it alleviates symptoms.
- **Hyperemetic Phase:** Intense, persistent vomiting, dehydration, and abdominal pain. Youth often seek relief through compulsive hot showers or baths.
- **Recovery Phase:** Symptoms resolve only after sustained cessation of cannabis use.

Why Youth Are at Risk

Several factors make adolescents particularly vulnerable:

- **Early Onset of Use:** CHS can develop after just 3 months of weekly cannabis use, especially in teens who begin using at a young age.
- **High Potency Products:** Modern cannabis strains contain elevated levels of THC, increasing the risk of overstimulation of the endocannabinoid system.
- **Misconceptions About Safety:** Many youth perceive marijuana as harmless or therapeutic, unaware of its paradoxical effects on the gastrointestinal system.

Clinical and Public Health Consequences

- **Emergency Department Visits:** CHS-related ED visits among adolescents have surged by over 49% annually between 2016 and 2023, with a median age of 17 years.
- **Hospitalization and Malnutrition:** Persistent vomiting can lead to dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, weight loss, and even esophageal tears (Mallory-Weiss syndrome).

Diagnostic Challenges: CHS is often misdiagnosed as cyclic vomiting syndrome or gastroenteritis, delaying appropriate care and increasing healthcare costs.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- **Youth Education:** Prevention efforts must include education on the risks of frequent cannabis use, including CHS, psychosis, and marijuana use disorder.
- **Provider Training:** Pediatricians and school health professionals should be trained to recognize CHS and screen for cannabis use in youth presenting with unexplained vomiting.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Data from states with recreational cannabis legalization show increased CHS rates, underscoring the need for youth-focused safeguards and public health messaging.

Our Coalition Call to Action

Community coalitions play a vital role in:

- **Disseminating Youth-Centered Messaging:** Use authentic youth voices to educate peers about CHS and the risks of cannabis misuse.
- **Engaging Schools and Youth Programs:** Integrate CHS awareness into health curricula and prevention campaigns.
- **Collecting Local Data:** Include CHS-related questions in youth surveys to assess prevalence and inform targeted interventions.



Building Wellness Through Community Connections

Expanding Access: St. Lucie Cares Behavioral Health Resource Guide Launches with Enthusiasm

The St. Lucie Cares Behavioral Health Resource Guide made a remarkable debut this fall! Following its showcase at the October Roundtable Board Meeting and St. Lucie RISE monthly meeting, network members and community partners took copies to share with their organizations and the communities they serve. In just two weeks, more than 500 copies were requested and distributed across St. Lucie County, an incredible milestone that reflects our community's shared commitment to expanding access to behavioral health information and resources. The guide has already become a vital tool in connecting residents with the support they need and in advancing awareness of mental health, substance use, and wellness services county-wide. With the upcoming launch of the St. Lucie Cares website and digital guide, we anticipate that community access to resource information will exponentially increase, ensuring that even more residents can easily find the help and support they need.



Building Capacity Through Mental Health First Aid

October also marked the completion of our final Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training of 2025, where participants earned certifications in Youth MHFA. This year, St. Lucie RISE expanded its reach by introducing Youth and Adult MHFA to our training offerings, strengthening our collective capacity to meet community needs. These trainings have equipped local partners and residents with the knowledge and confidence to recognize and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges, helping us build a stronger, more compassionate, and trauma-informed community together. We extend our sincere gratitude to Alpert Jewish Family Service for facilitating the MHFA trainings throughout the year. Their partnership has been invaluable in bringing high-quality, evidence-based instruction to our community. We look forward to continuing this collaboration into the next year, creating even more opportunities for training, capacity-building, and community impact.



Advancing Prevention Through Collaboration

Even without a November meeting, St. Lucie RISE's commitment to prevention and wellness remains strong. Our network continues to gain momentum as partners across St. Lucie County lead initiatives that promote mental health, substance use prevention, and overall well-being. This month, many are also helping raise awareness about the vital connection between physical and mental health in recognition of Diabetes Awareness Month. Through resource sharing, community outreach, and cross-sector collaboration, these efforts reflect our shared dedication to ensuring every resident has access to the knowledge and support they need. As we move through the final months of 2025, our focus remains clear: fostering community resilience, reducing stigma, and advancing prevention through shared action and connection.

For more information on the St. Lucie RISE Mental Health Collaborative and updates, 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
- ◆ Sean Boyle, Children's Services Council
- ◆ John Bolduc, St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office
- ◆ Michael Broderick, City of Fort Pierce
- ◆ Joseph Cracchiola, Department of Corrections
- ◆ Carol Deloach, Communities Connected for Kids
- ◆ Thomas Epsky, United Way of St. Lucie & Okeechobee
- ◆ Adrienne Huggins, Steering Committee Chair
- ◆ Jeff Lee, St. Lucie County Fire District
- ◆ Diamond Litty, 19th Judicial Circuit—Public Defender
- ◆ Tony Loupe, Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie County
- ◆ Erin Lowry, Board of County Commissioners
- ◆ Robert McPartlan, Department of Children and Families
- ◆ Leo Niemczyk, Port St. Lucie Police Department
- ◆ Judge Anastasia Norman, 19th Judicial Circuit-Judge
- ◆ 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
- ◆ Robert Ridle, Fort Pierce Police Department
- ◆ 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

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

CHAIR

Heather Parker, Guardian ad Litem

VICE-CHAIR

Carol Deloach, Communities Connected for Kids

SECRETARY

Ann Berner, Southeast FL Behavioral Health Network

TREASURER

Nathan Peterson, Department of Juvenile Justice

PAST CHAIR

Tony Loupe, Early Learning Coalition

STEERING COMMITTEE

Adrienne Huggins

AT LARGE

David Pickett, City of Port St. Lucie

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