

May 2023

THE MCS INSIDER

The official newsletter of
Manatee Children's Services, Inc.



Our History and Mission

"To advocate for and provide the resources, skills, and shelter to alleviate abuse through prevention and intervention for all children and their families."

Manatee Children's Services was founded in 1977 by Carol Chamberlain: a librarian, teacher, and social worker with a passion for child advocacy. Through her work in social services, Carol learned that Manatee County had a dire need for shelter to house abused children removed from their homes. She rallied a group of citizens to make the shelter a reality and, to this day, MCS continues to operate as Manatee County's only emergency shelter for child victims of abuse and the county's only Child Advocacy Center.

We provide a full spectrum of programs serving over 12,000 children and families annually. We offer programs in treatment, prevention, intervention, and residential services. Such programs include an emergency shelter, long-term group homes, mental health services, parenting education and training, forensic medical and specialized child victim interview services, support services for relative caregivers, teen pregnancy prevention, and children's personal safety. Visit our [website](http://www.MCSFL.com) to learn more.

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- **Save the Date: NASCAR Day Giveathon**
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W E L C O M E

TO OUR TEAM



Natalie Vega:
KIDS
Personal
Safety
Coordinator



Please welcome our new KIDS Personal Safety Coordinator, Natalie (aka "Nati") Vega. Nati has a diverse background in the U.S. Army, child advocacy, and cosmetology. After interviewing at MCS during her Bachelor of Social Work, she began volunteering after being inspired by our mission, resources, and interventions. What started as volunteer work turned into an internship and, now, Nati provides full-time education on personal safety to elementary school children in Manatee County.

"I am hoping to continue learning the ways of advocating for one of the world's most vulnerable populations, becoming a competent social worker, empowering kids to come forward with any difficulties they are facing, and leading within the agency," Nati said.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NASCAR DAY GIVEATHON!



We are excited to be joining The NASCAR Foundation for the NASCAR Day Giveathon! Created in honor of NASCAR's 75th Anniversary, the NASCAR Day Giveathon is a joint effort of the NASCAR industry to provide much needed funds to communities across the country.

Starting May 16 at 5pm EST, you can help our organization by donating to us, or sharing our fundraiser during the 75-hour period through the QR code above, or: <https://fanthem.io/give/nascar/giving-days/nascar-givingday-2023/charities/manatee-childrens-services-inc>

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters who helped make National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2023 a success! From lawns filled with blue pinwheels to Menchie's yogurt fundraisers to Crunch Fitness's "Dance for Child Abuse Prevention," our community really came out to represent this important cause.



PROM FUN AT THE MCS GROUP HOME



The girls at Our Place Group Home enjoyed a day of pampering and glam for this year's prom. Thank you to our staff and donors for making their dreams come true.



MCS IN THE COMMUNITY



Thank you to the North River Kiwanis Club for the donations from your snack drive for our therapy program and inviting us to present MCS to your organization. We appreciate all you do.



Not only is April National Child Abuse Prevention Month, but also National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. To show our support, Celeste Martens and Crystal Alvarez from the MCS clinical team attended Centerstone's Community Showcase and Art Show to End Sexual Violence. This family-friendly event featured an artwork exhibit, free food, giveaways, and more, with the goal of bringing hope to survivors of all ages.



Manatee Children's Services was proud to be involved in the 2023 Desoto Children's Parade & Early Learning Coalition in the Park. The Party in the Park featured community agencies offering free resources to parents, games for kids, free books, face painting, arts and crafts, and many more fun activities.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH

David J Reali CPA
TAX & ACCOUNTING

David Reali, CPA

We would like to recognize Certified Public Accountant and MCS Board of Directors Treasurer, David Reali. David has been a licensed CPA for about 15 years, with a focus on startup businesses. David's firm also provides year-round tax planning and advising for future tax savings to both businesses and individuals.

"There are so many ways a new business can derail themselves before they even make a profit, which can end very poorly for them and even leave them with a huge debt to the IRS," David said. "Our mission is to help navigate the potential pitfalls for new business owners while taking the stress and financial burden off their plate."



David, born and raised in Bradenton, is a U.S. Army veteran and a graduate of Manatee Junior College (aka State College of Florida) and University of South Florida. David and his wife, Julie, have four children and five grandchildren. David and Julie enjoy spending time with family as often as possible and being active in their church.

David discovered MCS in 2008 at a Country Night fundraiser through a friend who served on the Board of Directors at the time. He said he was immediately "hooked" and couldn't wait to make a difference for children and families in our community as a board member. David considers serving MCS to be a blessing not only for himself, but for his whole family. In fact, one of his daughters became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and works directly with children because of her time in a summer internship with MCS.

"There is so much joy in serving others and seeing lifechanging results in those we are called to serve," David said. "There is tremendous power in supporting, teaching and empowering others to make meaningful changes in their lives... breaking the abuse cycle, one person at a time."

APRIL SUCCESS STORIES

We are so happy for our success stories. Because of support from our generous community, happy endings are a reality for the children and families we serve.



A grandmother and grandfather joined the Grandparents as Parents (GAP) program at MCS in 2005 with their two grandchildren in hopes of meeting other kinship caregivers going through similar circumstances. Through GAP's help, they adopted their grandchildren. Years later, the couple adopted their daughter's third child after she was born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (drug withdrawals at birth). Sadly, six months later, grandfather passed away from an aggressive form of cancer, leaving grandmother to be the sole caregiver to all three children. Thanks to GAP, she has gained a wealth of support from staff and participants and is thriving with her grandchildren. She is incredibly thankful to GAP for helping through some of the hardest times of her life.

Manatee Children's Services, Inc.
A Child Advocacy Center
1227 9th Avenue West
Bradenton, FL 34205
(941) 812-9361
info@mcsfl.com

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