

February 2024



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](https://www.mcsfl.com) to learn more.

In this edition:

- **MCS at Music on Main**
- **"Wine and Wealth" planned giving event**
- **New employee spotlights**
- **January fun in residential**
- **Community spotlight**
- **MCS Black History Month reflections**

Save

The

Date

SUPPORT MANATEE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AT



MARCH 1 FROM 6:00 TO 9:00 PM

We are back after our original Music on Main event was rained out in September! Join us for this exciting night as the streets of Downtown Lakewood Ranch offer live music, food trucks, vendors, and kids' activities for all to enjoy. Guests will enjoy the sounds of Celtic Rock, bagpipes, and fiddles by Eireann's Call: a perfect way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day month!

All adult beverage and food truck proceeds will benefit MCS. We'll also be hosting 50/50 raffles, information about our programs, and raffle baskets at our vendor booth.

Leashed pets are welcome. Please bring a chair for your comfort. Coolers are not allowed at the event.

For event questions or to sign up as a volunteer, please contact Krista Post at kristap@mcsfl.com. We can't wait to celebrate this fun evening with our community!

WINE

And Wealth



Join us for light bites, wine, and networking while learning about the future of fundraising through nonprofit planned giving with an informative presentation by the Northwestern Mutual and Arroyo/McArdle team.



February 6, 2024

4:00-6:00 p.m.

**MANATEE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
2820 MANATEE AVENUE WEST
BRADENTON, FL 34205**

Presented by:

Michael Calamaras
Founder & CEO/Financial Advisor
Northwestern Mutual

Derek Ober
Financial Advisor
Northwestern Mutual

Erik Arroyo, Esq.
Arroyo/McArdle Partner



RSVP:

KRISTAP@MCSFL.COM OR MICHAELCALAMARAS@NM.COM

Welcome to our team



Amanda Rector

BRIC Parenting Coaches

Sarasota BRIC Parenting Coach, Amanda Rector, holds an associate degree in Office Administration-Medical Specialty with a year's experience in social work and 20 years in healthcare. Amanda is also a certified life coach and is fully trained in trauma-informed care. She is looking forward to furthering her knowledge and experience in coaching parents and changing lives while working at MCS. We are thankful to have you on board, Amanda!

BRIC Parenting Coach, Dre'Kalo (aka Dre) Clayton, comes to us with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. As a former foster child, Dre remembered the difference his case managers made in his life when they asked questions about his safety and showed him they cared, which inspired him to become a social worker and do the same for children.

"Fast forward into my adult life," Dre said. "After playing basketball, I wanted to give back but didn't know how. I found myself in my old neighborhood giving things away but still felt kind of empty."

Years later, his wife suggested he become a social worker so he could help kids in need who were just like him. Dre said he's been happy ever since and is excited to continue helping others who have shared some of the same challenges he experienced in his life. We are looking forward to seeing Dre connect with the families we serve and change their lives.



Dre'Kalo Clayton

Welcome to our team



Ashlee Elling

MCS Clinical Intern

MCS Intern, Ashlee Elling, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Criminology from the University of South Florida and is completing her internship with the MCS clinical program while earning her Master of Social Work at USF. She has also worked to help domestic violence and sexual assault survivors as a Victim Advocate for the Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center.

"I am looking forward to gaining further knowledge and experience in strength-based practices and trauma-informed care, as well as empowering others through working closely with MCS staff and vulnerable populations that MCS helps," Ashlee said.

BRIC Parenting Specialist

BRIC Lead Parenting Specialist, Becky Blanco, comes to MCS with a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Psychology from the Institute of Technology, along with experience in child welfare as a former case manager and substance abuse counselor, both of which she feels have prepared her to thrive in her role.

"My role in social work is to empower, listen to, advocate for, and educate clients," Becky said. "I love helping to encourage others to find the best version of themselves, to advocate for change, and empower those who have met significant barriers."

Becky stated she loves working at MCS and is eager for what's in store for her: "The mission and programs MCS has to offer are such a benefit to our community," she said. "I'm excited to continue learning and growing in my role within the organization."



Becky Blanco

JANUARY

FUN IN RESIDENTIAL



Foster children in the MCS residential program had so much fun driving go-karts and playing in the arcades at Livingston's last month. Thank you to our hardworking residential staff and our community's generous donors for making these outings possible.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Adrienne Bookhamer Lakewood Ranch Community Foundation

Adrienne Bookhamer, Executive Director of the Lakewood Ranch Community Foundation, has been instrumental in our community's efforts to help nonprofits. She is especially passionate about children and families after spending the majority of her career in child welfare and adoption in both Denver and Tampa prior to her role as CEO of the Foundation. Adrienne stated she particularly fell in love with helping older children get out of child welfare and into a place of permanency.

The Lakewood Ranch Community Foundation plays a vital role in championing a community that benefits all through its support of lifechanging nonprofits and causes across the area. Originally created as the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund in 2000 by Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, (the original developer of Lakewood Ranch), it supports people and interests through generous donor contributions that serve Lakewood Ranch and East Manatee County. The Foundation received its 501(C)(3) status in 2021 after working closely with the Manatee Community Foundation to achieve its mission. Since its inception, it has granted over \$1.5 million to over 140 nonprofits that are directly making an impact in our community. The Foundation has supported MCS programs with recognition and grant funding for several years, particularly through our Grandparents as Parents kinship caregiver program.

"Caregiving is hard, especially when families are dealing with much more than just taking care of children," Adrienne said. "They are dealing with trauma and emotional difficulties, making it much more difficult to keep children with their families. Seeing what I did while working in social services, this is an issue very near and dear to my heart."



MCS REFLECTS ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH



February is Black History Month and an important time for social workers, as many pioneers in Black History paved the way for the rights of underserved populations and have deeply influenced social work as we know it today. MCS staff shared some of the icons who have inspired them the most:

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As a former science teacher, I admire the innovation and genius of George Washington Carver. He was also known for being a man for the people. He was born into slavery and could have been quite wealthy through his career but chose to give back by donating his life savings of \$60,000 (about \$1 million by today's standards) to a museum and foundation in his name.

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Well-behaved women rarely make history, which is why Rosa Parks is my inspiration. She sacrificed her job and reputation to take a stand against racial segregation. Sometimes we need to make some noise to get things done, which is exactly what she did.

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Ida B. Wells. She was born an enslaved woman and grew up to become one of the best known journalists in U.S. history and a leader in anti- lynching.

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I see Laila Ameria Ali, retired undefeated female boxer and daughter of Muhammed Ali, as an icon because I too was a fighter when I was in middle school. It was not until I read about her career in boxing that I decided fighting for free is not going to get me anywhere in life. She motivated me to be mindful of my attitude, actions, and behaviors.

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Click on links below to view our website and follow us on social media:

