

January 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:

- **Holiday Project recap**
- **MCS Board Member welcome**
- **Community news**
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# To our 2023 MCS Holiday Project sponsors

Our community came through in a big way again this year for our annual Holiday Project. Pictured below are just a few of our many generous supporters. Thank you for caring about the children and families we serve.



# Welcome to our team

## MCS Board Member

Please join us in welcoming our newest Board of Directors member, Vanessa Castro. Vanessa is a Colombian-American entrepreneur and business owner in Bradenton.



*Vanessa Castro*

With a background in medical assistance, she transitioned into risk management and insurance, eventually starting her own company providing payroll and insurance for small businesses.

In addition to her professional endeavors, Vanessa is also dedicated to giving back to her community. She is proud to serve on the MCS Board of Directors so she can advocate for the safety and well-being of our community's children.

Vanessa is passionate about using her skills and experience to make a positive impact on the lives of others. In her personal life, she is a proud mother to a 13-year-old, and her love for her family is at the heart of everything she does. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, riding dirt bikes, and spending time outdoors.



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

From our MCS children







# COMMUNITY NEWS



**National  
Children's  
Alliance®**

MCS is the proud recipient of a \$42,177.00 grant from NCA for evidence-based therapy to children impacted by trauma from abuse, as well as their families. The program will assist with decreasing trauma symptoms such as depression and anxiety, understanding and reporting abuse, establishing boundaries, developing coping strategies, and learning how to protect themselves against future threats to safety.

In the past ten years, population growth in Florida has affected Manatee County significantly, resulting in a 20% increase of new residents. This growth has increased the demand for clinical services to our county's child abuse victims. MCS is the only Child Advocacy Center in Manatee County and one of only three facilities in the region that provide specialized therapeutic treatment for child abuse victims and their families. Currently, all three facilities have a waitlist for clinical services that address the effects of child abuse. The NCA grant funding will allow us to continue and expand our essential services to meet this crucial community need.



Thank you to The Lake Club Women's Giving Circle for your grant award to support new furniture in the MCS residential program. Our kids will be so excited to watch movies and share storytime on their new couches and recliners!



We are so happy to receive support for yet another year from the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund! The foundation's generous grant award will fund monthly "Grandparents as Parents" kinship caregiver support groups. Thank you all so very much!





# WELCOME TO OUR HOUSE

## Project Update



SO FAR WE'VE RAISED

**\$33,188.87**

For our \$50,000 goal to support the "Welcome To Our House" project.

We are so excited to share that, because of you, we're more than halfway to our first milestone for the "Welcome to our House" capital project! The William G. and Marie Selby Foundation will award MCS a \$100,000 grant for our project when we have raised \$50,000. This initiative is pressing. It will transform our agency headquarters to provide even better support for more than 20,000 lives that deserve our compassionate services.

We are asking you to make a leadership gift, as much as you are able to contribute. Your gift is critical to enhance services for child abuse victims and create the best environment for them to receive lifesaving care. We can accept your gift in any form: a check or cash, a grant from your donor advised fund, or using your credit card online at [www.mcsfl.com/donate](http://www.mcsfl.com/donate).

We would love to discuss your gift, share some of the many stories we encounter, or provide a tour of our facility. Remember, any gift amount helps children who are counting on us.

**To schedule a tour, contact:**  
**Krista Post, Development Coordinator**  
**(941) 812-9361 or [kristap@mcsfl.com](mailto:kristap@mcsfl.com)**

To read more about our Case for Support, visit  
<https://www.mcsfl.com/case-for-support/>



# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



## Chuck & Ann Marie Shields

Chuck and Ann Marie Shields have been supporters of Manatee Children's Services for five years. The charitable couple became involved with MCS after hearing about our Back-to-School backpack drive through one of their friends who worked for the agency. They immediately became year-round supporters after hearing about the significant needs our vulnerable population of children face and feeling compelled to help.

"Our special love is to provide stuffed animals for those children who are suddenly unhoused, with the hope that a furry friend to hang on to will help ease their situation," Ann Marie said.

Chuck and Ann Marie raised their children in Manatee County and shared with them the privilege of service to others. The entire family has volunteered for the American Red Cross during hurricanes and provided first aid and CPR training. They are also active in volunteering for the National Park Service.

After retiring from careers in business and education, Chuck and Ann Marie continue to seek ways to help improve the lives of children in our community.





# MCS PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



**Because of your support, our programs are able to continue breaking the cycle of child abuse for victims and families.**

KIDS Personal Safety served 13,955 children in Manatee County last year. The program delivers three 50-minute classroom presentations to elementary schoolchildren in Manatee County utilizing the evidence-based "Monique Burr" curriculum. These presentations aim to educate children about personal safety threats, focusing on child abuse and bullying. In addition to providing knowledge about these issues, the program empowers children to report potential threats to their safety at a level suitable for their age. Following each presentation, students participate in a brief post-test to recall information they have gained about personal safety, assessing their understanding and the material's effectiveness.

Most importantly, the post-test includes a section allowing children to express their desire to speak privately with the Personal Safety Instructor. In the event of a disclosure of child abuse during this private meeting, the instructor evaluates whether there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse, abandonment, or neglect by the parent or caregiver, subsequently reporting to the state child abuse hotline as mandated by Florida Statutes. If a child discloses bullying, the guidance counselor is informed to collaborate with the child and ensure the cessation of bullying. Children are informed during disclosure about the actions the Personal Safety Instructor will take to assist them, assuring them that a trusted adult will intervene to ensure their safety and put an end to any abuse.

KIDS Personal Safety has also successfully implemented a fully bilingual instructor, enabling effective communication and support for children who aren't proficient in English. We are so grateful for our KIDS staff members' hard work in helping to break the cycle of abuse.

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

