

November 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](http://www.MCSFL.com) to learn more.

## In this edition:

- Hurricane Milton recovery fundraisers
- MCS Holiday Project
- Agency news
- Giving Tuesday 2024
- Kendra Gives Back event
- Community spotlight
- Success stories



## HELP OUR FOSTER HOMES RECOVER FROM HURRICANE MILTON

Our homes for child abuse victims have faced significant damage from Hurricane Milton. We need support for food replacement, repairs, and supplies to ensure continued care for the children. Your donation will help us rebuild and provide safety, shelter, and hope.



Give to our  
GoFundMe  
campaign



Purchase  
hurricane  
relief items



Manatee Children's Services  
1227 9th Avenue W, Bradenton FL 34205  
(941) 345-1200    [info@mcsfl.com](mailto:info@mcsfl.com)





# Holiday Project

Bring joy and hope to children at MCS this holiday season by sponsoring a child through our annual Holiday Project! Your sponsorship will support children who have endured or are at risk of abuse or neglect, giving them the warmth and happiness they deserve.

To sponsor, visit [www.mcsfl.com](http://www.mcsfl.com) and fill out the form on our homepage. Sponsorships are \$100 per child and may include monetary gifts, gift cards, new store-bought items per your sponsored child's wish list, or items on the [Amazon wish list](#) at our homepage.

We especially encourage gift cards for our families as they alleviate stress for caregivers by allowing them the flexibility to purchase a variety of gifts for children as needed. They are also a nice treat for children who may not get to go shopping for themselves very often. NOTE: PLEASE ENSURE ALL GIFT CARDS ARE ACTIVE AND VALIDATED.

PLEASE TURN IN ALL GIFT CARDS AND WISH LIST GIFTS BETWEEN 12/2/24 AND 12/11/24. For more info, call (941) 345-1200 or email [HolidayProject@mcsfl.com](mailto:HolidayProject@mcsfl.com). Thank you for making the holidays brighter for our children!





# AGENCY NEWS



MCS parenting coaches completed the Sleep Baby Safely training and enjoyed lunch as a team at Riverhouse for some much needed R & R. The Manatee County funded initiative, led by Willona Milton and Victoria Morgan at Early Learning Coalition, educates caregivers and partners on creating safe sleep environments, identifying risks, and using effective strategies for infant sleep safety. Through community outreach and collaboration with key partners, we're now better equipped to provide support and resources to families and caregivers, ensuring every baby has a safe place to sleep.

Thank you to The Wawa Foundation for their grant award of \$2500 to support food and nutrition programs for MCS foster children. The rising cost of groceries has presented challenges when feeding up to 30 children, so this gift is very much appreciated.

The   
**Wawa**<sup>®</sup>  
Foundation

# GIVING TUESDAY



December 3, 2024

This Giving Tuesday, help us support “Grandparents as Parents” (GAP) caregivers who have opened their hearts and homes to their grandchildren after being removed from unsafe situations. These dedicated grandparents, many of whom are on limited incomes, are now facing the added challenge of providing holiday meals.

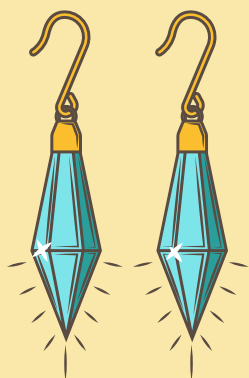
Your gift supports families like the “Richards,” a grandmother and grandfather who joined GAP with their two grandchildren to seek support from others in similar situations. With our help, they adopted their grandchildren. Six months later, Mr. Richards passed away from cancer, leaving Mrs. Richards as the sole caregiver. With ongoing support from GAP staff and participants, she continued to thrive with her grandchildren and is profoundly grateful for our help through her most challenging times.

Your generosity on Giving Tuesday can help lift a tremendous weight from their shoulders by ensuring they have the resources they need to feed their families warm, nourishing holiday meals. Your gift provides more than food; it gives these families a holiday season filled with comfort, stability, and hope.

Your will make a world of difference to grandparents and children in need. Thank you for helping us bring a little extra warmth and care to those who need it most this holiday season.

# Save the Date

Please support MCS for a "Sip and Shop" on Friday, December 6 (rescheduled from 9/26 and 10/18 due to Hurricane Helene and Milton) at Kendra Scott in the UTC Mall from 4-6 pm. Complimentary champagne will be provided while you shop. Can't make it in person? You can also shop online at [www.kendrascott.com](http://www.kendrascott.com) all day using the code below at checkout.



## Shine Bright, Do Good

JOIN US FOR A  
KENDRA GIVES BACK EVENT

### DATE & TIME

Friday 12/6 @ 4:00-6:00pm

### DETAILS

Sip, Shop, Support!  
Join us for a  
giveback event 20%  
of sales will be  
donated back to  
**Manatee Children's  
Services Inc.** Shop  
online using code:  
**GIVEBACK- HYBTS**



  
**KENDRA  
SCOTT**

  
**MANATEE  
CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**  
db  
MCS Child Advocacy Center  
[www.MCSFL.com](http://www.MCSFL.com)



# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



This month's Community Spotlight shines on Suli Law, a dedicated team led by partners Laura Sulisufay and Kelli Martinez. Combining expertise from insurance defense and personal injury, they've built a powerhouse firm of attorneys, case managers, and paralegals advocating for injury victims and homeowners in insurance claims and litigation.

Attorney Kelli Martinez, a committed children's advocate, serves on the MCS Board of Directors and mentors high school students through Take Stock in Children. Suli Law also actively supports local charities, including the Women's Council of Realtors Fashion Show and the LECOM Suncoast Classic for Sertoma Kids. Kelli stated our community has a crucial need for mentors and resources for children to inspire leadership and entrepreneurship.

When asked why she chose to serve on our Board of Directors, Kelli shared her admiration for our integrated approach to intervention, education, prevention, and support services.

"The holistic collaboration of services provides youth in need with a smoother, better focused transition and prompt access to services," Kelli said.



# MCS SUCCESS STORIES



Our residential staff work vigilantly to help the foster children in our group homes attain independent skills necessary to become successful adults.

“Nicole” entered care as a toddler and was adopted during elementary school. However, at 16, her adoptive parents returned her to foster care, and she came to live in the MCS group home. It took time for Nicole to adjust, as she initially struggled with outbursts and found it difficult to open up. Over time, though, she began to trust the MCS team and learned to communicate her feelings more effectively. With staff support, Nicole took steps toward independence, including earning her learner’s permit, taking driving lessons, and opening a bank account.

At 17, Nicole found a job and excelled in school. Despite occasional challenges, she worked with a tutor and graduated at 17, before aging out of the system. While still in care, she was accepted to State College of Florida, where she began coursework toward a degree in criminal profiling. When Nicole turned 18, she chose to enter extended foster care and secured an apartment.

Nicole’s journey has been full of ups and downs, but she persevered, and MCS is incredibly proud of her achievements. We look forward to seeing all she accomplishes in the future.

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

