

April 2026



# THE MCS INSIDER

Manatee Children's Services' Monthly Newsletter

**Child Abuse Prevention  
Month Edition**

## *Our History and Mission*

**Preventing child abuse, restoring healing, and strengthening all children and their families through advocacy, treatment, and shelter.**

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](#) to learn more.

In this edition:

- **New staff spotlight**
- **Upcoming events: Child Abuse Prevention Month**
- **Save the Date: 2026 Giving Challenge**
- **Program success stories**

# Welcome to our team

## Community Engagement Associate



We're so excited to welcome Chasity Vannatter as the new Community Engagement Associate joining the Development Team at Manatee Children's Services.

This newly created role reflects an important step forward for MCS as we continue working to expand our reach, strengthen community relationships, and increase awareness about our mission. As Community Engagement Associate, Chasity will help connect more individuals, businesses, and community partners to the work we do through events, social media, outreach, and networking.

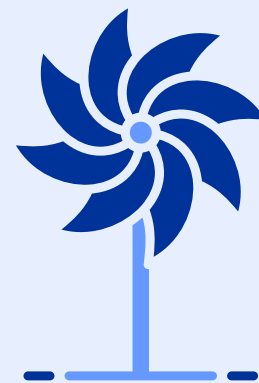
This role is especially important because meaningful change begins with awareness and connection. The more our community understands the impact of child abuse and the critical need for prevention, intervention, and healing services, the stronger our support system becomes for the children and families we serve. Chasity's work will help ensure that more people know who we are, what we do, and how they can become part of the solution.

Chasity is a proud mother, photographer, entrepreneur, veteran, and devoted family member with a deep passion for connection and community. As a trauma survivor, her commitment to this work is deeply personal. She brings both compassion and purpose to her role, along with a strong desire to advocate for children, be a voice for those who need one, and help create the kind of support that truly changes lives.

Chasity shared that she is honored to be part of MCS and the impact we make every day in the lives of children and families in our community.

Please join us in welcoming Chasity to the team. We're excited for the heart, energy, and connection she will bring to this important new role.

# JOIN US THIS APRIL FOR NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



Since 1983, April has been dedicated to raising awareness and preventing child abuse. The national Pinwheels for Prevention campaign encourages businesses and individuals to show their support for child abuse prevention and healthy child development by displaying pinwheels in their lawns. Led by Prevent Child Abuse Florida, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and the Florida Department of Children and Families, this campaign highlights programs that strengthen and support children and families. Pinwheels displayed across the state serve as powerful reminders of the safe, happy childhoods every child deserves.

Throughout the month, we encourage community members, partners, and supporters to join us in spreading awareness, supporting families in need, and learning how we can all play a role in protecting children. Please be sure to check the following pages for Save the Date information about upcoming events and ways to get involved during National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Prevention begins with strong families, supportive neighbors, and communities that are willing to step in and help. Together, we can help create safer, healthier futures for children in our community.

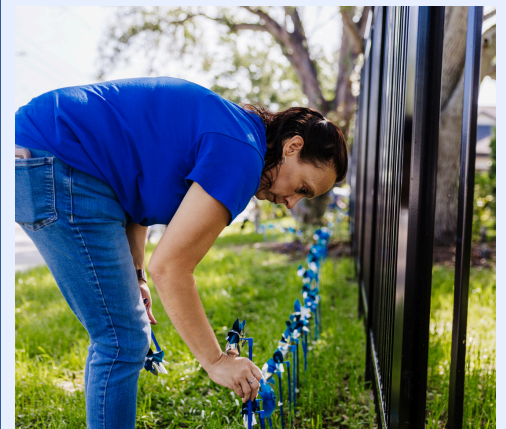
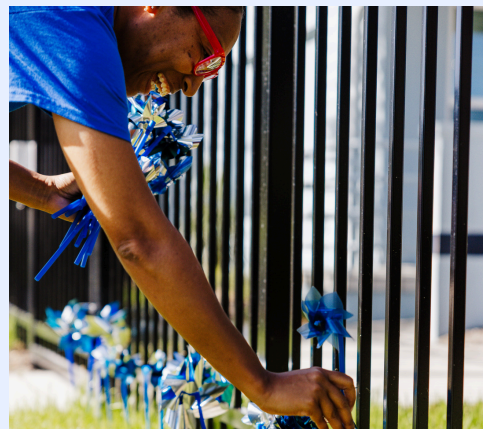


Click QR code to make a gift for  
National Child Abuse Prevention  
Month at MCS

# “WEAR BLUE DAY” & PINWHEEL PLANTING AT MCS



On April 1, we proudly kicked off National Child Abuse Prevention Month with our annual Wear Blue Day and Pinwheel Planting, bringing together staff and community supporters who share a commitment to protecting children and strengthening families. It was a meaningful day of unity, reflection, and hope as we stood together to raise awareness and show that every child deserves to grow up safe, supported, and loved.





## Bradenton: Come Walk with Us to Prevent Abuse & Protect Childhood!



Join the Lauren's Kids Foundation, Manatee Children's Services, Centerstone, and thousands of walkers across the state for the **2026 Walk in My Shoes** 1,500-mile trek across Florida. April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month and National Child Abuse Prevention Month — every step counts in the fight to prevent child sexual abuse and help survivors heal.

**Date:**

Wednesday,  
April 8, 2026

**Time:**

Registration Begins: 2:30 PM  
Walk Starts: 3:30 PM

**Starting Location:**

Manatee Children's Services  
1227 9th Ave W • Bradenton, FL 34205

**Walk Information:** Join us for a 4-mile walk to the 13th Avenue Dream Center (922 24th St E Bradenton, FL 34208)! An UBER code will be provided to walkers to cover the cost of a ride back from the walk.

Visit [LaurensKidsWalk.org](https://LaurensKidsWalk.org) to register & learn more! LAUREN'S KIDS



# ZUMBA

## DANCE for CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION



With Krista, Nina,  
& special guest  
instructors



Wear blue and join us for our 4th annual Zumbathon to benefit Child Abuse Prevention Month. Open to the public: no membership required!

**Sunday, April 12th, 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.**

Crunch Fitness at University  
8440 Lockwood Ridge Rd, Sarasota, FL 34243

**REGISTER HERE** >

**\$20 suggested donation**

[mcszumba2026.auctria.events](https://mcszumba2026.auctria.events)





Sponsorships needed for food, open bar, and entertainment! As a sponsor, you are showing that you stand behind National Child Abuse Prevention Month and are committed to helping every child feel safe not only during April, but year-round. Contact [kristap@mcsfl.com](mailto:kristap@mcsfl.com) to sponsor.

# PIZZA WITH A PURPOSE



## A Fundraiser for

Join us for a fun-filled event featuring delicious food and drinks from Mellow Mushroom, exciting prizes, music by Boris & Sax, and a special auction showcasing original artwork by a talented local artist, JLu Watercolors, all in support of a great cause.



**\$35 ticket**

includes food, open bar, and a chance to win prizes

When: April 15th  
Where: Mellow Mushroom, 6727 S Tamiami Trl, Sarasota, FL 34231  
Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM



SCAN FOR TICKETS

featuring Boris & Sax





Presented by the  
Community Foundation of Sarasota County

# Save the Date!

## APRIL 15-16, 2026

### NOON to NOON

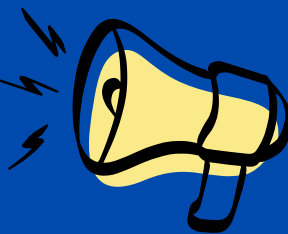
## Celebrating the 10th Giving Challenge

In just one day, you can change the life of a child in Manatee County. Manatee Children's Services is joining the 24-Hour Giving Challenge, and every donation helps children who have experienced abuse or neglect get the care, support, and hope they deserve.

The best part? To strengthen giving during the 2026 Giving Challenge, The Patterson Foundation will provide a 1:1 match for all unique donations, up to \$100 per donor, per organization made online with a credit or debit card.

Your gift matters. Your voice matters. Your action matters. Together, we can ensure that no child faces the future alone. Join us April 15-16...because 24 hours is all it takes to make a lifetime of difference.

**Each Giving Challenge  
donation tonight receives  
an entry into our special  
raffle drawing!**





# MCS PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



Sometimes the most meaningful moments at MCS start with a simple connection. Parenting Coach Jennifer Dyer learned that someone in the community wanted to donate a vehicle, and at the same time, we knew of a mom in our program who had been struggling to bring her four children home after reunification because she didn't have reliable transportation big enough for all of them. When those two needs lined up, everything just clicked.



The donor didn't just hand over the car, they went above and beyond by covering new tires, a battery, and brake repairs so the vehicle would be safe and ready for this family. Today, we were able to give this mom the title, and once she finishes registration and insurance, she'll be able to pick up the keys and finally take that last step toward bringing her children home.

What might look like a simple car donation is actually something much bigger for this family. It's stability, independence, and the chance to move forward together. We're so grateful for the generosity that made this moment possible and for the reminder that when a community shows up, truly life-changing things can happen!



*Happy Birthday*

Brandon Haynes  
Angel Miller  
Estrelita Thompson

**Manatee Children's Services, Inc.**  
**A Child Advocacy Center**  
**1227 9th Avenue West**  
**Bradenton, FL 34205**  
**(941) 345-1200**  
**info@mcsfl.com**

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





