

Good News

from our funded partners

**Regular Board Meeting
November 1 2024**



Children's Board
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

www.ChildrensBoard.org

Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA

Sulphur Springs YMCA Out of School Time Program



In the wake of two major hurricanes in recent weeks, we've never been prouder of the work being done in Sulphur Springs. Our dedicated team, both in Sulphur Springs and across the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA, came together to support the community by serving hot spaghetti meals to over 200 residents impacted by Hurricane Milton. This gathering was more than just a meal—it was an opportunity to connect with students and families, share essential resources, and extend a helping hand.

With crockpots generously donated by Tampa Y staff members, we cooked an impressive 900 meatballs! Our community partners also played a critical role: United Way Suncoast provided snacks to-go, and the Children's Board sent two volunteers to distribute resource guides, bags, and assist in serving families. One parent, uncertain about how they would provide dinner for their family that night, expressed deep gratitude for this support from the YMCA.

Together, we demonstrated the true spirit of community, resilience, and compassion in challenging times.

We continued our commitment to families by hosting our annual Trunk or Treat event, inviting all Sulphur Springs K-8 Community School families to enjoy games, activities, and plenty of candy in the safe, welcoming environment of the school campus—a fun alternative to neighborhood trick-or-treating.

But our support extended beyond costumes and games. Recognizing the valuable school days lost to the recent hurricanes, our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to create a curriculum that helps students catch up and re-engage with learning. Through both celebration and focused support, we're here to help our students and families thrive.



Children's Board Family Resource Centers

Plant City

Testimonial

I am writing to express my gratitude and share how the Children's Board Family Resource Center (CBFRC) in Plant City has positively impacted my family's life. In a time when families face numerous challenges, I am incredibly thankful for the support and resources the CBFRCs provides to our community.

When my family was going through a difficult period, we were unsure where to turn for help. Balancing work, childcare, and ensuring our children had the support they needed at home felt overwhelming. The CBFRC in Plant City became a lifeline. From parenting classes and therapy resources to food and financial assistance programs, they offered a range of services that made an immediate difference in our lives.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Children's Board Family Resource Center is that they provide not only resources but also genuine, personalized support. The staff took the time to listen to our concerns and guided us through the programs and services available. Instead of offering one-size-fits-all solutions, they helped us create a plan tailored to our family's specific needs.

I'd like to acknowledge the outstanding staff who made this possible: Mayra Castellanos, Intake & Referral Specialist, who has worked with families like ours for over 10 years; Carson Brett, our Support Specialist, who made our children feel right at home as soon as they walked through the doors; Darrie Soares, Family Specialist, who connected us with valuable organizations; Joai Broughton, Center Manager, whose leadership has transformed the center's atmosphere, bringing balance and unique experiences that had been missing for the last 15 years; and Tyheshia Scott, Director, who is an incredible support in our community initiatives.

For example, we participated in parenting workshops that equipped us with the tools and confidence to manage challenging situations at home. The center's food assistance program helped keep our family nourished during a tough financial period. Additionally, the playgroups for young children allowed my kids to socialize and develop essential early learning skills in a safe, nurturing environment.

Thanks to the support we've received from CBFRC, we are now on more solid ground. Our children are thriving, and my family has a renewed sense of hope and stability. I am deeply grateful to the Children's Board Family Resource Center for their ongoing commitment to strengthening families in our community. I encourage any family in need of assistance to reach out to them. They truly make a difference, and our family is living proof of that.

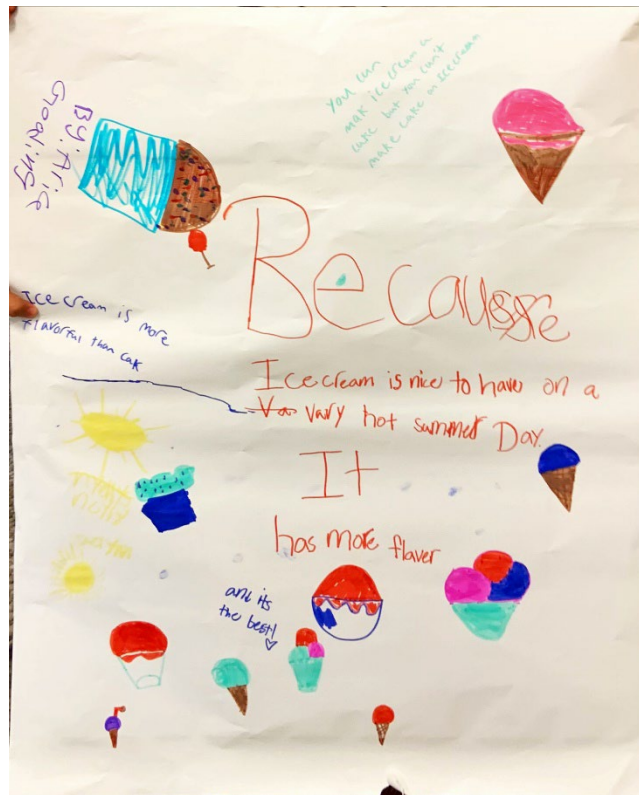
Girl Scouts of West Central Florida

Girl Scout Troop Program

This month, the Girl Scouts of West Central Florida's Children's Board of Hillsborough County-supported troops learned about democracy and explored ways they can participate in it. We found many fun ways to engage with this important topic. The girls learned about the three branches of government and their roles and responsibilities. We even held our own election to decide whether cake or ice cream was better and brainstormed rules or laws we would make if we had our own country, city, or school.

The girls also discussed presidential elections and created their own campaign posters to campaign for Girl Scout meeting duties. They will soon hold a mock election, where they will present their reasons to the group for why they should be chosen for their preferred duty.

To wrap up the month, we explored voting with a Girl Scout cookie tasting, allowing the girls to vote on their favorite cookies. Adventurefuls and Thin Mints won as the top favorites!



Seniors in Service

Foster Grandparent Program with Reader in Motion

A new school year brings new beginnings and familiar faces! As students and families settle into the rhythm of school life, teachers are getting to know their students, and our Foster Grandparent Program, alongside Readers in Motion Education Advocates, is eagerly awaiting the chance to greet each bright little face that walks through the door.

Our Foster Grandparent Program with Readers in Motion has been preparing for one of the most exciting times of the year: the big backpack delivery! We've been visiting classrooms to meet new friends and warmly welcome back familiar faces. Each registered student received a vibrant, colorful backpack filled with educational goodies! These supplies aren't just fun—they're essential for supporting homework, replacing worn-out materials, and enhancing classroom learning.

This is such a heartwarming time of year, knowing these backpacks will ease the burden for more than 300 families. Thanks to the generosity of the Children's Board, students and families can focus on what matters most: learning, growing, and thriving. With the love, support, and dedication of our amazing Education Advocates, we're beyond excited to kick off a school year filled with fun, learning, and plenty of smiles!



Family Healthcare Foundation

Connecting Kids to Care

Karla Navas, a Healthcare Navigation Specialist with Connecting Kids to Care, recently helped a mother whose nine-year-old son had been diagnosed with leukemia. The child was on full-pay Florida KidCare health insurance, with the mother paying a monthly premium of \$259. Karla assisted them in updating their Florida KidCare application, and the family was approved for subsidized coverage—bringing their premium down to just \$10 per month!

Karla then applied for the Family Healthcare Foundation's Premium Assistance Fund on their behalf, securing a full year of paid premiums for the child's health insurance. Thanks to Karla's expertise, the family was able to navigate their healthcare options with ease, lifting a financial burden during a challenging medical time for their son.



Champions for Children

Family Focus

Testimonial

Comments from the Family Focus Needs Survey:

- "I appreciate how they're helping me have a healthy pregnancy and providing baby essentials."
- "I love how kind and respectful my case worker has been. She's the best I've had in any program. Her patience with my children is incredible, and my kids love her."
- "I learned about baby development with Lotoya. Everything has been perfect."
- "The connections are positive, welcoming, and supportive. They help you achieve your goals in an empowering way."



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Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County

Healthy Families Hillsborough

University of South Florida Circle K International students and Tampa Kiwanians joined forces to assemble 280 Birthday Cake Kits for children enrolled in the Healthy Families Hillsborough program. Each kit contains everything a parent needs to celebrate their child's birthday: cake mix, icing, a cake pan, balloons, a birthday card, and a can of Sprite to replace oil or eggs. These kits were made possible through the generous support of volunteers and funding from the Florida Kiwanis Foundation and Tampa Kiwanis Foundation.



Preserve Vision Florida

Children's Vision Health and Safety Services



Preserve Vision Florida (PVF) provides vision screening services multiple times a week at the Children's Board Family Resource Centers. Working closely with BayCare Kids, we offer vision screenings and follow-up care for children who may need a medical eye exam and, potentially, glasses. PVF also extends these services to parents and caregivers, ensuring they can support their children's learning with the confidence of good vision.

One family we have helped is Marina and her two children, Hilda and Jose. Marina, who had previously received an eye exam and glasses through our program, returned for her children's screenings, creating a full-circle moment for our team.

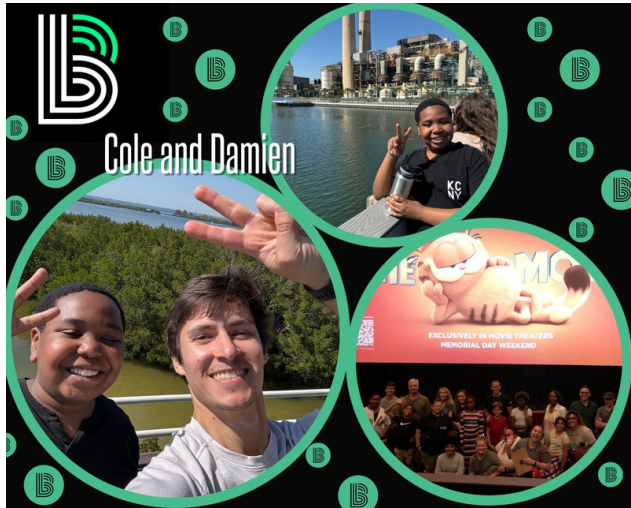
Marina faces a unique challenge—she cannot read or write, making access to services more difficult. Our vision health associates supported her every step of the way, ensuring that she and her children received the necessary services. This included vision screenings, scheduling a medical eye exam, and receiving glasses. We also provide all participants with information on vision health and safety, along with sunglasses to protect their eyes from UV rays.

Being a trusted resource for families in need, and welcoming them back with their loved ones, makes us proud of our work. We are dedicated to continuing this life-changing service, helping many more families access the vision care they deserve.

For more information on our vision screening services at the Children's Board Family Resource Center, please visit www.pvfla.org to view our calendar of scheduled services.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay

1-to-1 Mentoring (Middle)



Cole and Damien have been matched for over two and a half years and will celebrate three years together in February 2025. When they first met, Little Brother Damien was shy but excited to get to know Big Brother Cole. Since then, they've created a bucket list of activities and have steadily been checking items off, with Damien enthusiastically keeping track of their adventures. Together, they've visited the manatee viewing center and attended a BBBS screening of Garfield, among many other memorable outings.

Damien's mom, Jasmine, says that Big Brother Cole has helped Damien "come out of his shell." After learning some cooking skills from Cole, Damien started volunteering to help in the kitchen, even assisting his mom with Thanksgiving dishes over the past couple of years.

Life changed for everyone in 2022—Cole and his wife welcomed their first child, Damien became a teenager, and his mom began nursing school. Even though they can't meet in person every month, they stay connected with calls, texts, and FaceTime chats every few weeks. When asked what he appreciates about Damien, Cole speaks highly of him. Damien shared that his Big Brother Cole is "always fun!" and "always there for me!"

Cole has been a strong supporter of Damien and his goals, noting how Damien has matured and learned to work well with others. Over the years, Cole has shared how their bond has grown closer, saying they can "be ourselves around each other and trust each other." Overall, Little Brother Damien has become more confident and open, growing into a thoughtful and kind young person. We all look forward to seeing Damien continue to flourish.

Success 4 Kids and Families

Successful Families

Testimonial

Working with Erin has been a transformative experience for both my son and me. From the very beginning, Erin's support and compassion allowed us to open up in ways we hadn't anticipated. We've gained invaluable tools for managing our emotions and overcoming challenges, and I've learned how to better support both my son and myself through these processes.

Our therapy sessions have not only strengthened our communication but have also deepened our bond. I've seen a noticeable boost in his confidence and overall well-being, and I feel more prepared to navigate the ups and downs of parenting. Erin's genuine care and thoughtful approach in each session have truly made a profound difference in our lives. We are incredibly grateful for the guidance and support we've received and feel more hopeful about the future. Therapy has been a gift for our family, helping us grow stronger together.

I cannot recommend Erin highly enough! From our very first session, it was clear that she brings an exceptional level of empathy, professionalism, and expertise to this process. Erin creates a safe, welcoming space where I felt comfortable exploring my thoughts and emotions. Thanks to her guidance, my stress and anxiety have significantly decreased, and I now experience a greater sense of calm and well-being.

Erin tailors each session to address my unique needs, providing insightful guidance and practical strategies that have truly made a difference in my life. The progress we've made under her care has been remarkable. Erin is not only a skilled therapist but also a genuinely caring individual who is deeply invested in our well-being.

Sincerely,
Valerie E.

University of South Florida Board of Trustees

Trauma-Informed Schools: Tiered Interventions



It's finally Fall! With cooler weather, pumpkin spice, and the USF Trauma-Informed School Project in full swing, there's so much to celebrate. We're thrilled to welcome Lee Daly, our new Trauma Coach, to the team. Lee brings 26 years of experience working with children and families, with expertise in special education, autism, and clinical social work.

Together, Lee and Sonni Pitts (our returning Trauma Coach) are working closely with the Frost Elementary Administration and Student Support Staff to plan small group interventions focused on building social and emotional coping skills. These groups are set to begin in early October. We are grateful for the support from Frost Elementary's Student Support Staff, who are helping educate families about the program and coordinating the process of obtaining consent for

participation.

At Frost Elementary's first Open House of the school year, forty-four parents and their children visited the Trauma-Informed School Project Information table to learn more about the skills-based groups and pick up some fun swag. It was wonderful to see so many families engaged and excited to participate.

Frost teachers participated in CARE (Child-Adult Relationship Enhancement) in the Classroom training on August 24, and several teachers also attended the CARE Coach training on September 14 at USF to become Teacher CARE Coaches. With support from Dr. McCoy, Trauma-Informed Schools Project Supervisor, USF Coaches have been offering CARE Coaching in the classroom. Soon, Frost teacher CARE coaches will be providing coaching sessions to help fellow educators effectively use the 3 P's (praise, paraphrase, point outs) in their interactions with students. We're excited about what's ahead and look forward to a truly exceptional school year, filled with meaningful CARE in the classroom.