



Speak Up for Kids
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

Speak Up for Kids

PRESS KIT



Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County

MISSION

100% Advocacy for every abused, abandoned, and neglected child in Palm Beach County.

VISION

Through 100% advocacy every child is **nurtured, supported,** and **has access** to connections and resources necessary for them to **know their value** and **reach their full potential.**

“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.”

- MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Speak Up For Kids champions best-interest child advocacy and supporting children enrichment needs within the dependency system. Through effective advocacy the cycles of abuse, violence, and crime are being broken one child at a time, and children’s futures are being rewritten.

We create engagement pathways for our community to promote positive youth development in Palm Beach County. We equip students, caregivers, ambassadors, social workers, and volunteer advocates to **SPEAK UP** for KIDS and ignite transformative **IMPACT**. Through key partnerships, we design intentional opportunities to serve and support the children and caregivers involved in the foster care system. Our solution teaches pure reciprocity in giving, builds upon unique talent and leadership skills, and ultimately fosters a cohesive community of compassion and support for all children.

Daily, we challenge ourselves to evolve and to **MEET THE NEEDS** of the children we serve. The work is challenging and sometimes even heart-breaking. Yet we forge ahead knowing that with each instance of a Child and Volunteer Advocate connection. We know the impact is **REAL**, now and into the future, throughout Palm Beach County.

GET IN TOUCH

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www.SpeakUpForKidsPBC.org

MEET OUR LEADERS



PRESIDENT - Scott Penney

For over two decades, Scott has worked for the 15th Judicial Circuit - Office of the Public Defender, supporting the Constitutional right, in criminal cases, for the appointment of legal representation for the indigent. He began his career as an investigator, working his way to Chief Investigator. Today, he serves as Director of Operations for the Office of the Public Defender. Scott was initially introduced to the Guardian ad Litem model of child advocacy in 2007 and Speak Up for Kids; serving for three years as a board member, and now steering strategic direction as the President of the Board of Directors.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Coleen LaCosta

Coleen LaCosta began her career in victim advocacy 25 years ago while working for the State Attorney's office. That experience put her on the path of transition where she began seeking justice for child victims. A fire was ignited, and that flame morphed into a lifetime of determined, vocal advocacy for our most vulnerable. In all she does, LaCosta aims to break the cycle of abuse and neglect in our community.

“It is an imperative that we help. The bar cannot be set any lower than perfection. Despite anything, we Speak Up for Kids.”

-SCOTT PENNEY · PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

IN THE PRESS



The Palm Beach Post

TRANSPARENCY AWARDS



Platinum
Transparency
2023

Candid.

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

“We are honored and blessed to have strong local donor support. In 2020, many of our benefactors were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We were surprised and humbled to find that although funding decreased, overall commitment and dedication did not.”

- COLEEN LACOSTA · EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



1,992
Children Served



833
Children in a Safe,
Permanent Home



506
Volunteer Child
Advocates



1,241
Court Hearings
Attended



12,588
Advocacy Hours
Donated



67,999
Advocacy Miles
Traveled

Speak Up for Kids funds **Circle of Security**, a support for parents involved in Early Childhood Court. Adapting to COVID-19 circumstances, this service is offered virtually, so parents can continue to work on building solid relationships with their child(ren).

One mother who was recently reunified with her child, stated in court that **Circle of Security** has been a very beneficial service and significantly improves her bond with her one-year-old child.

OUR INITIATIVES



STUDENTS SPEAK UP FOR KIDS!

Through **STUDENTS Speak Up for Kids**, we encourage 'Student-led' project-based advocacy benefiting foster kids. **STUDENTS Speak Up For Kids** places youth at the helm of advocacy and empowers them with opportunities to serve and speak up for the children involved in Palm Beach County's dependency court system.



NEW MUSIC BUDDIES PROGRAM BY JOCELYN + ADEN

Inspired by our **STUDENTS Speak Up for Kids** program, **Jocelyn and Aden created Music Buddies**. With a goal and vision to provide foster kids with music lessons, some of these children will settle into a permanent place in a school band or become a member of a musical ensemble. **Jocelyn and Aden intend to heal and change lives with the power of music.**



NEW FLOURISHING FUTURES

Graduation is a milestone! **Only 30 - 50 percent of foster children graduate from high school.** In partnership with Leadership Palm Beach we developed "Flourishing Futures" fund which SUPPORTS: 1. Graduation **CELEBRATIONS**; 2. **GIFTS** and **RECOGNITION** and 3. **SCHOLARSHIPS** for our grads.



THERAPEUTIC COURT Therapeutic Court is an **award-winning pilot**, the first of its kind in the United States, serves the most complex cases in our county through a round-table team approach. Every agency involved in

the child's case is represented and held accountable, with progress monitored in a single weekly meeting with Judicial oversight.



EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT Because victimhood does not discriminate based upon age, Early Childhood Court targets the best interests of infant and toddler victims and their families. It is a programmatic

imperative to find safe, permanent placement and establish normalcy as quickly as possible.



FOSTER PALM BEACH Seeing the ongoing need for more foster parents, Speak Up For Kids created the Foster Palm Beach program, a community-wide approach to raising public awareness about the critical need for foster families to care for Palm Beach

County's children and assisting in the coordination of credentialing for new foster homes.



PALM BEACH GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM The Guardian ad Litem Program, with 700+ volunteers

serving greater than 1,600 local children, is the heart of our support. The court-appointed, one-on-one, best-interest focused, advocacy

provided by these 'Guardian Angels' presents the best safety, permanence, and normalcy outcomes for children involved in dependency cases.