



Contact: Renea Teaster, Facilitator

Phone: (352) 341-7075

Email: facilitator@citrusalliance.org

For Immediate Release

March 8, 2013

Children's Week to Be Celebrated in Citrus County

Over the past 17 years, the only broad-based promotion of children and family issues in Florida has been "Children's Week". A true grassroots event since its inception, Children's Week is supported by over 100 different non-profit, corporate, philanthropic, faith based, state agencies and organizations. Children's Week develops and implements over 200 community events and activities state-wide, bringing thousands of parents, children, policy makers, professionals, community leaders and concerned citizens together to share valuable knowledge and information about children's issues in each community across the state and at the State Capitol.

To celebrate Children's Week locally, the Devereux Kids Neighborhood Project and the Community Alliance of Citrus County will be hosting a Family Fun Day at Little Spring Park in Crystal River behind City Hall on Saturday, April 6th from 10am—2pm. The event is FREE for all children and families to attend. This is an outreach event for families with efforts aimed at promoting the health, safety and well being of all children through having fun interactive activity tables throughout the park for children and their families to play and learn. Activities such as "Art in the Park," a local art display for area Children & Youth to show their art skills will be available as well as the "Teen Talent Show" which will highlight youth singers, bands or entertainers that will perform at the Gazebo. There will also be a Picnic Lunch served (as long as supplies last), and many other vendors on hand that will help families to connect and obtain information on local activities for children and families. The Family Fun Day event organizers are looking for additional sponsors, vendors, and entertainment. The Family Fun Day promises to be a great event, and a way that parents can obtain information for ideas of things to do in Citrus County for children and youth with the summer coming up.

Additionally to celebrate Children's Week, Citrus County will participate in the "Pinwheels For Prevention" a child abuse awareness campaign that consists of pinwheel gardens that will be placed throughout the county. These pinwheel gardens will be sponsored by the Department of Children and Families and Devereux Kids. Another exciting event during Children's Week will be a "Teen Town Hall" that will be sponsored by Partners for a Substance Free Citrus, the Anti-Drug Coalition. During the Town Hall, students will participate in group discussion and other activities along with a special reading of the winning essay from the essay contest. The essay contest will be in conjunction with local middle and high schools, giving students the opportunity to write about how their school and community have positively impacted their life. The essay winners will receive gift cards.

As an emblem to remind us all the significance of Children's Week, area children will participate in the "Hanging of the Hands," where they will make variations of cut-out hands that will be hung in Citrus County Libraries throughout the county, as well as some hand art projects going to the state capitol in Tallahassee. These hands sent to Tallahassee will be hung in the capitol Rotunda, and will be delivered by local Youth Commissioner Nathan Meeks a fifteen year old Citrus High School Student appointed to the Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida. The Hanging of Hands will be the kick off for



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the Children's Week, and will be sponsored by the Community Alliance, The Early Learning Coalition, Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, Devereux Kids, and local daycares. The hands will be hung on Sunday, April 7th to kick-off a week of special activities in conjunction with the event.

The growing success of Children's Week in recent years is largely due to the collaborative nature of the event and the fact that many non-profits can come together under "One Voice" to support children's issues and advocate for the full spectrum of children's services and needs. Local event organizer Cara Meeks of Devereux Kids says, "We are so looking forward to this Family Fun Day event as a part of Children's Week. We know that it is going to be a great day for families to come out and enjoy the music, crafts, and games together as a family, while receiving valuable information about services that are available to them in the county."

For additional information on Children's Week, and how you can support the Family Fun Day as well, please contact Cara Meeks at (352) 586-2843, Event Chair or Renea Teaster, Facilitator for the Community Alliance at (352) 341-7075 for more information. With the support of the community, this event can make a difference by helping a child to laugh, a teen to smile and give families the bonding time they need.