

# United Way of Charlotte County Community Collaboration

## Kids Thrive / Navigator Advocate

This program works to support the long-term success of babies born substance-exposed. Kids Thrive families are taught methods for reducing the impacts of substance exposure for their babies. They are provided support (prenatal to age 5) to be successful in raising healthy children. Services to parents include parenting, literacy, and life skills training.

### Where it started (2018)

The Kids Thrive Community Collaboration funded by United Way of Charlotte County began with a vision to reduce the impacts of trauma and adversity.

The partners set the vision across Charlotte County as a whole and they also targeted those individuals who were significantly at-risk for long-term effects of trauma -- babies who were born after being exposed to harmful substances in the womb.

The Kids Thrive partners understand that the road to poverty starts at birth (even before birth!), acknowledging that early childhood trauma has an effect on education outcomes. The goal of the program is to work with families to overcome their challenges and break the cycle of trauma and poverty.

By addressing developmental, behavioral, and social issues early, these children have improved readiness for school and have a greater likelihood of future school success.

- ✓ fewer children in foster care
- ✓ fewer justice-involved youth
- ✓ reduced crime
- ✓ fewer youth in mental health crisis
- ✓ families drawing on their strengths
- ✓ steady employment

Efforts to build community resilience can have tremendous long-term results.



# United Way of Charlotte County Community Collaboration

## Kids Thrive / Navigator Advocate

### What it has accomplished (2022)



**46 babies born  
only 7 needed the NICU**



**3 moms have received  
Woman of Courage award**



**61 families have participated in  
Circle of Parents peer support group**

Carissa came to Kids Thrive when her newborn baby was still in the hospital. Her biggest concerns were bringing her baby home, the baby having withdrawals, and how to succeed at breastfeeding.

Weekly home visits from the Navigator Advocate helped Carissa access the support and resources she needed for both her and her baby to thrive. She obtained breastfeeding guidance and a breast pump, assistance applying for WIC, Healthy Start, and childcare vouchers, as well as networking through the Circle of Parents peer support group that helped her connect with others who could understand what she was going through.

### Where it is headed



Kids Thrive has a continued focus on healthy family bonding through literacy activities. They recently applied for additional grant funding to support the promotion of parent(s) reading to their children daily, including activities that encourage children to engage in one-to-one, face-to-face interactions and play with their parent(s). These activities support the child's oral language development and lay the foundation for later literacy learning.



# United Way of Charlotte County Community Collaboration

## Kids Thrive / Early Learning & Literacy

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland has played an integral role in addressing and reducing the impacts of childhood trauma for our youngest residents. Literacy and parent engagement are at the heart of this great work.

### Where it started (2018)

The Kids Thrive Community Collaboration funded by United Way of Charlotte County began with a vision to reduce the impacts of trauma and adversity.

Early childhood literacy and parent engagement were woven throughout much of the Kids Thrive program, and included initiatives lead by the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland.



40	children were paired with a Literacy Buddy
6	preschool classes participated in Class Buddies
97	children participated in Class Buddies
50	total adult volunteers who were a Literacy Buddy or Class Buddy

A Literacy Advocate served Charlotte County through the Literacy Buddies program, Class Buddies Program, and community book baskets. In its first year, a total of 79 Charlotte County children in the classroom programs received pre-literacy screenings to assess their reading skills. 64% of students scored average or above, leaving 36% children in need of additional pre-literacy skill development.



A total of 40 book baskets were located at local business throughout the county to encourage parent engagement in a setting where parents had extra free time (waiting rooms).



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## Kids Thrive / Early Learning & Literacy

### What it has accomplished (2022)

**37 providers in  
Charlotte County  
received Calming Corners  
and provider training**

Young children who are processing traumatic events often struggle in early learning programs due to presentation of challenging behaviors. Calming Corners are designed, with proper training, to support children by providing a safe, trauma-sensitive space to create positive self-identities.



With much success in Charlotte County, the Department of Education provided grant funding to expand the Calming Corners project across the region. 62 contracted providers in Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties now have Calming Corners.

"Love my calming corner! When children in my class are having difficulty managing their emotions, I give them the option to go to the cozy corner. I always make sure they understand the goal behind the space. In my room, the goal is for students to use the calm down corner until they feel they can rejoin the group."

Since I have begun utilizing my cozy corner, I definitely see a difference in my classroom behaviors and children often ask to go to the area."

### Where it is headed



Kids Thrive, through the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, continues to provide support to parents and caregivers who are struggling with child behavior. Parent Chats, offered monthly, and Calming Kits for individual use in the home are steps towards children who are better able to self-regulate and parents who are more receptive and adaptive when behavioral issues present themselves.