



Speak Up for Kids

OF PALM BEACH COUNTY



PRESS KIT

LOCAL ADDRESS

205 N. Dixie Hwy Suite 2.100 · West Palm Beach, FL 33401

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 1896 · West Palm Beach, FL 33402

Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County

ABOUT US

Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County, Inc. is the exclusive 501(c)(3) fundraising arm for the Guardian ad Litem Program of Palm Beach County, Florida. Through the recruitment, training, and retention of Guardian ad Litem **VOLUNTEER CHILD ADVOCATES** the cycles of abuse, violence, and crime are being broken, while children's futures are being rewritten.

These Volunteer "Guardian Angels" are committed exclusively to each child's emotional, educational, and physical well-being throughout dependency court proceedings. Serving as the only 100% objective voice, and effectively, the eyes and ears of the dependency court, they ensure representation of the all-around well-being of abused, abandoned, and neglected children in our community. Greater than **640 volunteers** serve one-on-one with each child directly to get to the heart of what IS REQUIRED for that child to thrive.

These volunteers then work in concert with a Child Advocacy Manager and Guardian ad Litem Attorney to present, in dependency court, each child's **best interests**.

We continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of the community Children, Volunteers, and Advocacy teams we champion and support. The work is challenging, and the road bumpy, but we forge ahead knowing that with each Child and Volunteer connected, the impact is REAL, now and into the future, throughout Palm Beach county.

MISSION

Speak Up for Kids (SUFK) mission is **100% advocacy** for every abused, abandoned, and neglected child in Palm Beach County. We champion best-interest child advocacy through the **recruitment, training and retention** of court-appointed volunteer child advocates.

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.

GET IN TOUCH

Local Address: 205 N Dixie Hwy Suite 2.100 **Mailing Address:** PO Box 1896 West Palm Beach, FL 33402

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www.SpeakUpForKidsPBC.org

MEET OUR LEADERS



PRESIDENT - H. Shaw Heydt Thomas

A graduate of Colgate University, Shaw has worked with the Sydney Olympics, Conde Nast, in sales, curation and national legal marketing and branding. Founder of Jigsaw Inc, she brings her strategic communications and business development expertise to businesses, brands, and creative projects - her most cherished, Speak Up for Kids! Her goal is to heighten awareness and empower the local community to champion advocacy on behalf of our most vulnerable victims and precious resource - our children.

“

**...TO KNOW THAT EVEN ONE LIFE
HAS BREATHED EASIER BECAUSE
YOU HAVE LIVED - THAT IS TO
HAVE SUCCEEDED.**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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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.

Enhancing Lives... Adding Value



Highlights 2019

“ IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA YOU THINK WILL POSITIVELY IMPACT THE LIFE OF A CHILD OR BUILD AWARENESS AROUND FOSTER AND DEPENDENCY ISSUES, WE WANT TO WORK WITH YOU ”

- Coleen LaCosta, Executive Director

MOMENT OF IMPACT

Sarah is nine years old. She was removed from her parents' care and, five years later, continues to have nightmares about everything she witnessed and endured. It was suggested that she would benefit from equine therapy. YOU made it happen! Sarah is on her way to sweet dreams. Thank you for your dedication to #SpeakUpForKids.



Our Initiatives



THERAPEUTIC COURT

An award-winning pilot, the first of its kind in the US, to serve the most complex cases in our county through a round-table team approach. Every agency involved in a child's case is represented and held accountable every week in a single meeting with Judge oversight. In its first year, TC achieved 11 ADOPTIONS across the 20 most traumatized children in the county's care.



EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT

Child victims of abuse enter the system at every age. ECC is targeting the best interests of infant and toddler child victims -- 0 to 3 years. Working with their families, ECC is ensuring safe, permanent homes for these young ones faster.



FOSTER PALM BEACH

Dependency numbers continue to rise, and safe housing for our children remains in short supply. In 2018, we extended our impact efforts by creating Foster Palm Beach to recruit more foster families locally. 2019 saw this program institute a multi-pronged approach to outreach through faith-based advocacy, seeking corporate partnerships, and creating a unique opportunity to engage South Florida Realtors through the Open House Initiative.



STUDENTS SPEAK UP FOR KIDS!

In an effort to empower students with opportunities to serve and speak up for the children involved in Palm Beach County's dependency court system, STUDENTS Speak Up for Kids will provide students the tools to create their own advocacy campaigns.