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Christina.kaiser@cckids.net

Contact: Christina Kaiser

(772) 528-0362

First responders, CCKids polish off child abuse during MANicure event

Port St. Lucie – Local first responders and child-welfare professionals will launch the **MANicure Movement to “polish off” child abuse during a special kickoff event, April 10, at the St. Lucie County Fire District, 5160 NW Milner Drive, Port St. Lucie.**

Festivities begin at 9 a.m. with a special photo opportunity with Fire Chief Nate Spera, St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara, Fort Pierce Police Chief Diane Hobley-Burney and Port. St. Lucie Police Chief John Bolduc.

The statewide movement began three years ago in Orlando to spark community-wide conversations about ways to stop violence against children and to coincide with National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

This is the first year the movement has come to Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast.

“We want people to know that child abuse is happening right here, in our community, and we want nothing more than for it to end,” said Carol Deloach, CEO of Communities Connected for Kids, the organization that oversees child-welfare services in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties. “One in five children experience some sort of abuse before the age of 18.”

Indeed, more than 1,000 children are currently in the local child-welfare system, and more than 700 of those children live out of home due to abuse or neglect.

The launch will begin at 9 a.m. with a press conference, then offer a day-long opportunity to learn more about child abuse prevention.

“We are focusing on men because painting one nail is an attention getter and we think it will start a lot of conversation,” said Christina Kaiser, CCKids community relations director. “After all men do not usually wear nail polish.”

The event will include free nail paintings for both men and women, a photo booth, information about foster care, the Guardian ad Litem program and other ways to get involved. Community groups and businesses also can participate in the initiative, Kaiser said.