

Community support helps local foster youth get prepared for new school year

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GAINESVILLE – Partnership for Strong Families (PSF), a community-based care agency in North Central Florida, partnered with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) to help local children who have experienced abuse and neglect to prepare for their first day of school.

Today (Wednesday, Aug. 3), representatives from the ACSO joined PSF staff in packing backpacks for some of the more than 300 children in need this year.

PSF conducts an annual Back to School Drive to support the children in their care who would not otherwise have access to the supplies they need for the new school year. These efforts are largely supported by more than 20 community organizations, businesses and individuals, including ACSO.

"It is our goal to ensure these children, many of whom will be in foster care for their first day of school, have every opportunity their peers are afforded," Stephen Pennypacker, president/CEO of Partnership for Strong Families, said. "ACSO plays a critical role in ensuring the safety of our community's children, and we are grateful for their support in ensuring the academic success of these children as well."

Over the past month, ACSO has collected supplies and \$300 in monetary support for PSF's Back to School Drive, but they wanted to do more.

"In order to ensure that our children enter the public school system equally and adequately prepared to meet the educational challenges ahead, we must all be an active participant, not only at an organizational level, but on an individual level as well," Alachua County Sheriff Sadie Darnell said. "I am proud of our ACSO family and their commitment to the betterment of our community both on and off-duty. It is our privilege to partner with PSF to begin the healing process for these children and contribute to their future success."

Partnership For Strong Families is a strong partner in the TriCounty Community Resource Center, located in Chiefland. To learn more about Partnership for Strong Families, please visit <http://www.pfsf.org/>.

CF receives \$294,930 suicide prevention grant

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OCALA - The College of Central Florida was recently awarded a \$294,930 Campus Suicide Prevention Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The funds will be used to implement a college-wide suicide prevention project. The project will allow the college to develop and implement an infrastructure that will promote education and awareness, incorporating the philosophy that it is everyone's responsibility to be knowledgeable on suicide awareness, know the signs and symptoms, strategies to dealing with and know the resources to use, if an incident happens.

It is estimated that a minimum of 800 CF students, faculty and staff, and family members will receive formal education and training on suicide prevention and mental health issues through classroom-based instruction, a series of seminars/workshops, and guest speakers.

Many more individuals will gain awareness through print materials and social media.


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