

Good News

from our funded partners

**Regular Board Meeting
August 1 2025**



Children's Board
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

www.ChildrensBoard.org

Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County

HealthySteps

Testimonial

HealthySteps Hillsborough is a nationally recognized early childhood program that partners with the USF Health Department of Pediatrics. HealthySteps meets with families during well child visits to share information on developmental milestones, positive parenting, community resources, and to provide support to families who want the best possible future for their children.

On June 27, 2025, a mother and her daughter met with the HealthySteps Specialist for her thirty-six month well child visit. They have been with HealthySteps Hillsborough since August 2022, when the baby came for her two month well visit. After being informed that this would be their final visit with a HealthySteps Specialist, as the child was completing the program at thirty-six months of age, the mother shared how much the program has meant to her family:

"I absolutely love how my child development specialist is always supportive, motivational, and very attentive. They always provide the best help and advice!"



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University Area Community Development Corporation (UACDC)

Get Moving! Water Safety

Siblings Improve Confidence at Summer Swim Lessons

When asked how swimming lessons at Adderley have impacted their confidence, sister, N., smiled and said, “Way much better.” Her brother, K., sitting beside her, chimed in with a grin, “Way much better better.” Their enthusiastic responses say it all — these siblings feel significantly more at ease in the water.

N. and K. are just two of many children participating in swimming lessons held every Tuesday and Thursday at their apartment community pool. Offered in partnership with the YMCA, the Get Moving Water Safety program provides free swim instruction to Adderley residents ages zero to eighteen. The goal is to help children feel confident, capable, and safe in and around water.

Some participants are just starting out, learning foundational skills like blowing bubbles and kicking. Others, like these siblings, are building on what they already know — mastering techniques such as treading water, floating on their backs, and refining their strokes.

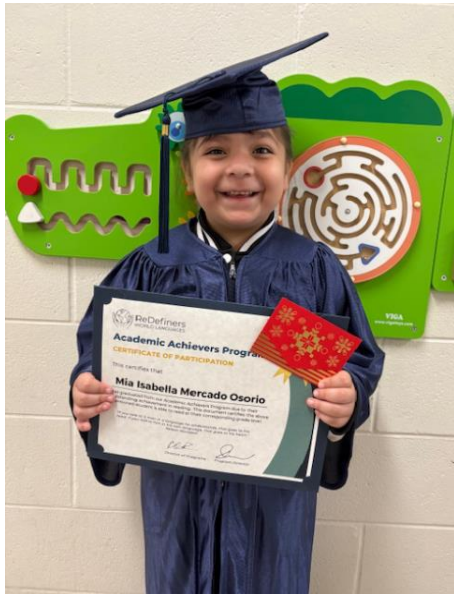
Whether a child leaves having learned one new skill or several, they walk away with more than just swimming knowledge. They gain confidence, develop life-saving abilities, and take important steps toward lifelong health and safety.



ReDefiners World Languages

Academic Achievers

As we wrap up our contract year, we are excited to share that, thanks to CBHC, we have been able to increase the number of students served. This year, we provided reading tutoring to fifty-one students. Of those, fifteen students reached grade-level reading, and thirty-eight students improved their proficiency in reading and writing skills.



Positive Spin

Empowering a Community with Hope (E.A.C.H. One)



My name is Ms. Berrien, and I would like to say that Ms. Elaine and Ms. Vernetta have been wonderful. They checked on my son and me, and they are the kindest women I have ever met. I truly appreciate everything they have done for us, and I cannot thank them enough. I am grateful to Ms. Elaine, Ms. Vernetta, and the Positive Spin program for helping me through this process.

Ms. Vernetta connected me with Ms. Elaine, the Housing Manager in the Positive Spin program. Ms. Elaine was able to help me secure a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment. Ms. Vernetta completed the paperwork to assist with my deposit and prorated rent. Ms. Elaine also signed me up for the Metropolitan Up and Out Program.

When I moved into my apartment, I did not have any money left for food. Ms. Vernetta helped me by providing a Publix gift card.

Once again, I would like to thank Ms. Elaine and Ms. Vernetta for everything they have done for me and my son.

United Food Bank & Services of Plant City

Food, Education, and Empowerment for Development (F.E.E.D)

Plant City nonprofit's innovative F.E.E.D. program connects nutrition, early learning in 83 degrees.



More people live in poverty and face hunger in East Hillsborough than anywhere else in the county, says Ms. Heysek, President and CEO of United Food Bank and Services of Plant City.

“That’s why the need is so great in this area,” she says.

Her organization regularly supplies food to families from ten communities in the area. Beyond that, the nonprofit created a six-week course that teaches parents who receive food the importance of preparing nutritious meals, especially for young children.

Called F.E.E.D., which stands for Food, Education, Empowerment for Development, the program helps parents understand the connection between good nutrition and early learning. About ninety percent of its funding comes from the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County. Other sponsors include Lakeland Regional Health: Physician Group, Plant City; Bruton Memorial Library; Florida Literacy Coalition; and Publix.

To read more, [Plant City nonprofit's innovative F.E.E.D. program connects nutrition, early learning.](#)



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Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay

Foster Grandparent Program with Readers in Motion

With the 2024–2025 school year officially behind us, we are taking a moment to celebrate the incredible impact our Readers in Motion Classroom Grandparents made and to look ahead to an even greater year. These devoted volunteers offered students steady support, mentorship, and care, leaving a lasting impression in every classroom they served.

Classroom Grandparents provided consistent social and emotional support to two hundred twenty-seven students, with one hundred ninety showing measurable improvement in their behavior. This exceeded our goal of seventy-five percent with an impressive eighty-four percent success rate—a true testament to the power of intergenerational mentorship.

Their impact extended beyond the classroom and into students' homes by encouraging strong parent-child connections through shared literacy activities. This year, two hundred sixty-six parents participated by helping their children complete reading challenges and Winter Activity Books and by offering feedback through surveys.

Thanks to their engagement, we proudly reached our goal of eighty-five percent parent involvement, building literacy skills and stronger family bonds at the same time.

The impact is not only seen in the numbers but also felt in the hearts and testimonials of our Classroom Grandparents and the teachers they support.



Children's Home Network

Supporting and Empowering Educational and Developmental Services

Children's Home Network hosted its annual Back-to-School Event on August 1, 2025, themed "Wonderful World of Reading." Two of the organization's community programs—Reaching and Inspiring Students Everywhere (RAISE) and Supporting and Empowering Educational and Developmental Services (SEEDS)—joined forces to celebrate and prepare Hillsborough County students for the 2025–2026 school year with a joyful, literacy-focused event.

Families enjoyed a day filled with:

- Free backpacks with essential school supplies
- Literacy-themed activities and games
- Children's books for all ages
- School readiness information
- Food, prizes, and entertainment



Community partners included Autism is Real (AIR), Hillsborough County CINS/FINS (Children and Families in Need of Services), HealthPRO Pediatrics, Children's Board Family Resource Centers, Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Pepin Academies, Loop Therapies, Hispanic Services Council, and many more.

Special thanks to Sacred Heart Church for donating prizes for families, the Tampa Police Department for donating two bicycles and two helmets for children, and Bess the Book Bus for sharing books with young readers.

Local news station WFLA stopped by to highlight the event and its impact on the community. Children left with new supplies and big smiles, and many families proudly signed the Reading Pledge, committing to make daily reading a part of their routine.

Children's Home Network extends heartfelt thanks to all families, partners, and volunteers who made this event a success—and wishes all Hillsborough County students a wonderful and enriching school year ahead.



Preserve Vision Florida

Children's Vision Health and Safety Services



Early intervention is at the core of our mission, as it can determine whether a child keeps or loses their precious sight. For sixty-eight years, Preserve Vision Florida has provided vision services for children and adults, actively referring students to eye care professionals to prevent serious vision loss.

Our PVF team screened five-year-old Luz at the Children's Board Plant City Family Resource Center for two years. At this year's screening, they identified the possibility of amblyopia in her left eye. Often called "lazy eye," amblyopia can result from crossed eyes or from one eye focusing better than the other. Over time, the stronger eye suppresses the weaker one, which may eventually lose vision if left untreated.

To prevent this, Preserve Vision Florida referred Luz to a pediatric ophthalmologist. In the meantime, Bright Eye Kids doctors provided a thorough examination, and Lenscrafters donated glasses to help her see with her right eye. This timely intervention will

give Luz the treatment and support she needs to strengthen her left eye and maintain healthy vision.

Preserve Vision Florida serves as the first step to transformative care. Screenings lead to referrals, which lead to accurate diagnoses and treatment. It is the power of knowing—and we are working to empower the Tampa community, one screening at a time.

Positive Family Partners

Learning Connections



Learning Connections is a free program that helps students in third through eighth grade develop stronger thinking and learning skills within specific zip codes. Funded by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and administered through Positive Family Partners, Inc. (PFP), the program is located at 7402 N. 56th Street, Suite 300B in Tampa. Those interested in learning more about the program may contact Dr. Grosz, PFP's Executive Director.

This summer, the program hosted "Summer Sizzlers for Students to Soar," where students made new friends, worked together on projects from beginning to end, and continued to build academic skills while improving confidence and self-esteem. Using the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment curriculum and mediation techniques, activities encouraged students to take a summer break while still practicing valuable skills.

Through these experiences, students learn how to think, not what to think—setting them up for success in school, daily routines, and life's challenges. This program truly changes lives.

