

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Speak Up for Kids



Speak Up for Kids Palm Beach County

Reaching **100% ADVOCACY** for every abused, abandoned and neglected child in Palm Beach County

FROM OUR LEADERS

Dear Friends,

During the past two years, **YOU** have stood with **US** in the face of uncertainty, event cancellations, and system overload. Only through the extraordinary generosity of **OUR** donors - **YOU** – were **WE** able to meet the needs of local children.

YOU helped to **PROPEL** forward Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County's mission of 100% advocacy, increasing the **VELOCITY** of our impact, and ensuring the **UNFALTERING VOICE** for our most vulnerable populations.

YOU joined **US** in transforming apparent barriers into brilliant opportunities for collaborative service and advocacy. In addition to the fantastic work **WE** already perform, during 2021 – 2022, **WE** achieved:

- Welcome and complete transition of new Board President, Scott Penney
- Expanded youth engagement through Students Speak Up for Kids
- Creation of Parents Speak Up for Kids
- Creation of the Corporate Ambassador Program
- Compilation and documentation of Speak Up for Kids' history
- Successful fundraising events
- Renewed commitment to equity and inclusion

This 2021 – 2022 Annual Report attempts to put on paper **YOUR** tremendous impact. However, words could never fully encapsulate the significance of everything **YOU** have empowered **US** to accomplish.

As **YOU** read the following pages, may **YOUR** heart swell with the full measure of **OUR (YOU + US)** shared legacy as **COMMUNITY STRATEGISTS** seeking the best for each child, **EMPOWERERS** of the powerless, and **STORY CHANGERS** for those facing the most miserable conditions.

**“The bar cannot be set any lower than perfection.
Despite anything, we Speak Up for Kids.”**

- SCOTT PENNEY, BOARD PRESIDENT

TOGETHER, we left an indelible mark on Palm Beach County.

Yours in Heartfelt Advocacy,

Scott Penney
Board President

Coleen LaCosta
Executive Director



SPEAK UP FOR KIDS GOVERNING BOARD

SCOTT PENNEY

President

ROBIN HENDERSON

Vice President

REBECCA WEISS

Treasurer

DAVE ELDER

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COLLEEN MULLANEY*

FRANK CUPIDO

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Immediate Past President

JOHN O'HARA

Legal Advisor

PEARLIE STRIBLING

Lived Experience Advisor

ELLEN KRANZLER

Member at Large

COLEEN LACOSTA

Executive Director

"Each morning, I wake up to the stunning realization that I have before me a finite number of hours to make the greatest possible impact on the lives of thousands of children. Yet, the beauty of my every day is I am not alone and have the great privilege of working with a passionate team who individually embrace this work with hearts wide open, united in the same purpose; ensuring OUR community of children THRIVE."

- COLEEN LACOSTA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*COLLEEN MULLANEY PASSED AWAY ON JULY 21, 2021



MISSION

100% Advocacy for every abused, abandoned, and neglected child in Palm Beach County.

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**.

EQUITY INITIATIVE

Our mission of 100% advocacy for local children has always been approached to ensure the equitable distribution of resources to advance permanence, normalcy, and safety for each child for whom we advocate. This year, we joined **dozens** of local nonprofit and governmental bodies and more than **350** individuals in an explicit pledge of commitment to racial and social equity by participating in Palm Beach County's Advancing the Mission (AIM) Initiative.

Through this experience, Speak Up for Kids Board of Directors applied a top-down approach in using equity tools and internal assessments to identify and update policies and institutional practices that lead to increased inclusion across all demographics while fully integrating an equity action into our overall Strategic Plan.

In addition to our action plan, we have also created the **Speak Up for Kids GREEN Equity Statement**.



“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.”

- UNKNOWN

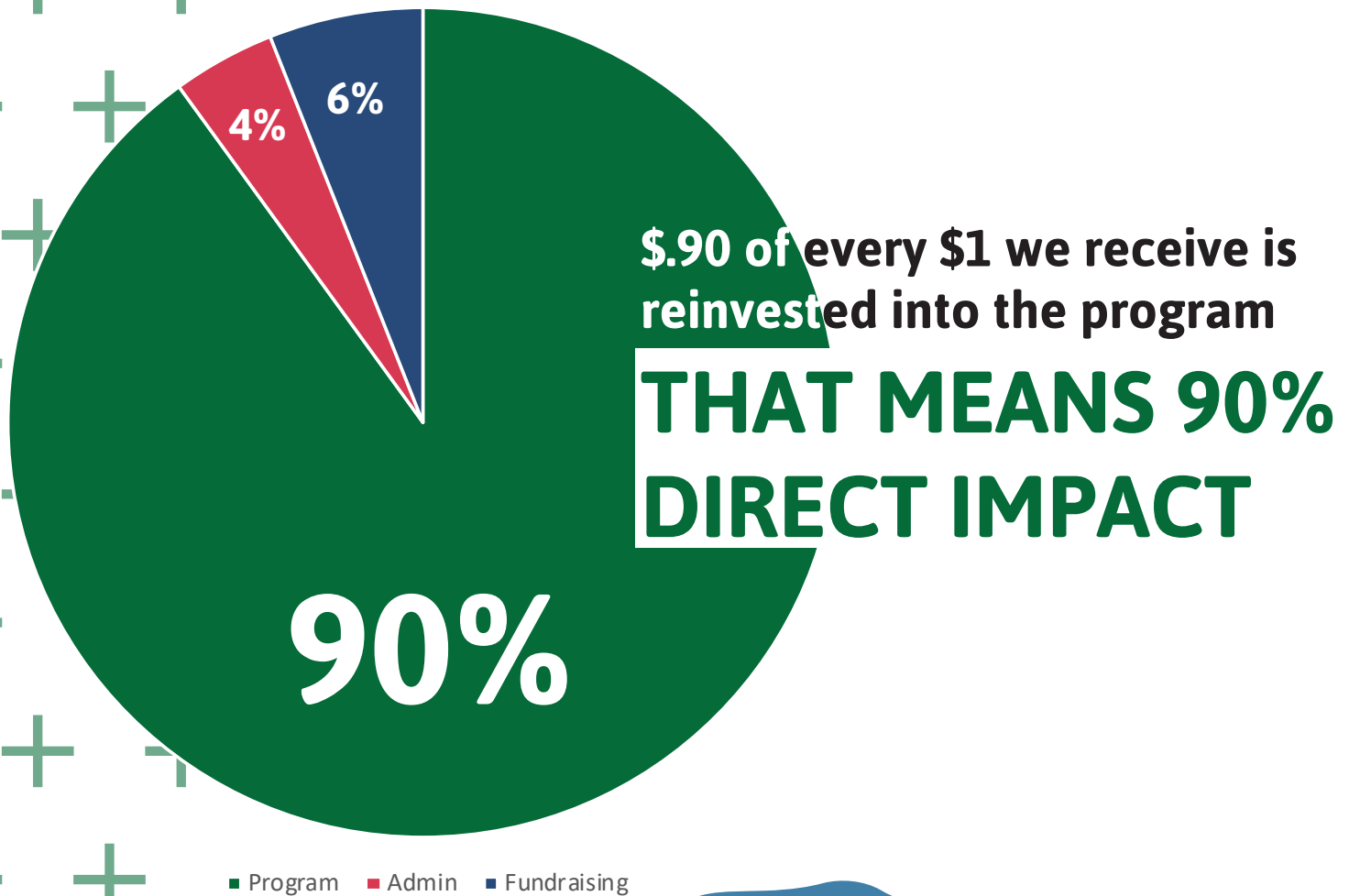
EQUITY STATEMENT

Our mission of **100% advocacy INCLUDES** the boundless commitment to learn, stretch, and **Grow**. We listen to our employees, community, and the youth we serve to appropriately address concerns inclusively, with input from voices **Reflecting** the diverse populations for whom we are responsible and to whom we are accountable. Daily, we **Embrace**, recognize, and appreciate the diversity of cultures unified in the goal of **Equitable** allocation of resources to provide safety, security, and **Normalcy** for the 1,500 local children we serve.

THE STORY OF DIRECT IMPACT

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

As we investigate innovative ways to provide service to foster children, we also look at efficiency measures, including locating existing community resources to fill needs or reducing systemic redundancies to enhance service provision and increase impact.



\$.90 of every \$1 we receive is reinvested into the program

THAT MEANS 90% DIRECT IMPACT

“There is no shortage of charities to which donors can contribute in Palm Beach County, so when they commit their dollars to us, we ensure to carry forward our mission of 100% advocacy by making the largest possible direct impact.”

- COLEEN LACOSTA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want, and that they can grow up in peace.”

- KOFI ANNAN



Speak Up for Kids of Palm Beach County, Inc. rewrites the expected futures of children in care while serving as the exclusive 501(c)(3) fundraising arm for the **Guardian ad Litem Program of Palm Beach County, Florida.**

The Guardian ad Litem Program uses court-appointed, one-on-one, best-interest advocacy on behalf of more than 1,500 local children. The 620+ ‘Guardian Angel’ volunteers present the best permanent security, shelter, and normalcy outcomes for dependency-involved cases.

In the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, sometimes even heartbreak, we forge ahead, matching the intense perseverance and resilience of the children we serve. We face each challenge as an evolutionary opportunity to create a revolutionary impression, knowing that the impact is **UNDENIABLE, MEANINGFUL, and PERPETUAL** with each Child and Volunteer Advocate connection.

Our work in supporting the recruitment, training and retention of Guardian ad Litem **VOLUNTEER CHILD ADVOCATES** effectively breaks abuse, violence, and crime cycles and potentially transforms generations. However, only one-on-one advocacy can get to the heart of what is **REQUIRED** for a child to **THRIVE**.

This corps of greater than 620 Volunteer “Guardian Angels” is committed exclusively to each child’s emotional, educational, and physical well-being throughout dependency court proceedings serving as the **ONLY 100%** objective voice, the eyes and ears of the court, and usually, the most consistent presence in the child’s life.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

90+ Volunteers Added

18 Direct Service Positions Funded

500+ Additional Capacity for One-On-One Advocacy

BY THE NUMBERS

“Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work.”

- C.S. LEWIS



2,152
Children Served



462
Cases Added in 2021



895
Children in a Safe,
Permanent Home



15,660
Advocacy Hours Donated



628
Volunteer Child Advocate
“Guardian Angels”



81,670
Advocacy Miles Traveled



9,065
Court Hearings Attended



\$480,451
DONATION VALUE
of Miles Driven

“Each day, our volunteers don their proverbial capes and serve as heroes to children in need. Sometimes that means appearing in court and representing the child’s best interest. Other times it is arranging for tutoring or therapy. But, many times, it means simply sitting and listening. They truly are angels.”

- COLEEN LACOSTA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GUARDIAN AD LITEM ADVOCACY

“My first assignment was for a seven year old girl. Her mother was her caretaker. Her father was deceased as a result of an overdose. The mother was using methadone, and was having a difficult time abstaining. The child was being neglected by her mother. However, four generations were living under one roof, so the child was getting by.

Visiting the home for the first time was a dark experience. No one was getting along, and you could cut the tension with a knife. The mother and her mother (the child's grandmother), had a particularly cold relationship. The mother and the child were basically holed up in a bedroom day and night as a result. It was overall a very depressing, and seemingly hopeless situation. Summer was coming and there were no planned activities at all for the child.

THAT HAS ALL CHANGED NOW. The child, with some urging and some help with facilitating enrollment, would spend the summer attending day camp. The child was dead set against the idea, but could not wait to return after her first day of attendance. Getting the child out of that house, and getting her to play with other kids, was a huge positive move. Her entire demeanor changed. The mother also seemed to be energized as a result. She went out and obtained a part time job, which she really likes. The child in turn saw the difference in her mothers demeanor. It was quite a dynamic change to observe. All of a sudden, tension lifted in that house, people were laughing, talking with one another and just plain happy. Both the child and mother are doing well now. It's actually a joy now to visit them in their house. I believe I will be involved with this family long after the case is closed. My lessons from just one assignment:

- Build a trusting relationship with both child and mother.
- Don't judge, but encourage and be supportive. Be consistent.
- Work with the mother and child to help them see solutions, rather than just problems.
- Show respect to the mother, especially in front of the child.
- Be a good listener.
- Care; **really care.**

The rewards of being a GAL are great. You are actually blessed with the opportunity to help people change their lives for the better. You feel the weight of that responsibility, but when you have an outcome like the one I have just described, there is no better feeling in the world!”

Mike

Guardian ad Litem · Palm Beach County

From **camp costs**, to **food**, to help with **stable housing**, we are able to help families **break the cycles of abuse and neglect** because of **YOU!**

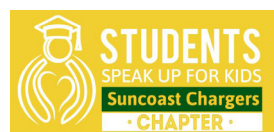
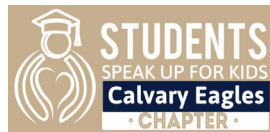
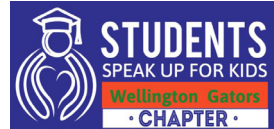
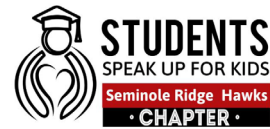
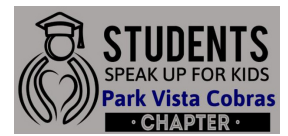
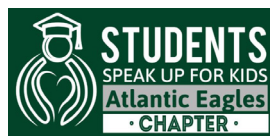
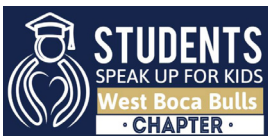
WE CHANGE LIVES

Targeted Programs

STUDENTS SPEAK UP FOR KIDS



From elementary to college, OUR STUDENTS advocate for and empower their peers to succeed! We equipped them, then placed them at the helm of advocacy, providing opportunities for project-based support of other young people. With 14 active chapters, and additional chapters in the pipeline, our young people continue to shine a light and show that they are indeed the future; and the future is looking good.



Greater than 250 students joined chapters, created projects, built awareness, and actively advocated for their peers across Palm Beach County by:

- 14 Active Student Speak Up for Kids (SSUFK) chapters
- 3,700+ hours donated in project-based advocacy
- 1,000+ books collected for book drives
- 180+ Birthday boxes

If our students can dream it, we will support it!



A Program by Jocelyn & Anden. Implemented in 2021, this program began as a Students Speak Up for Kids project conceived by high school musicians Jocelyn Spellman and Anden Toale, whose desire was to provide virtual music lessons – including instruments – to those less fortunate. High school youth serve as instructors, equipping dozens of foster-involved young people to explore and express themselves through the power of music.

- 26 Children received instruments & virtual music lessons
 - 7 Volunteer music instructors
- Recognized by **CBS** as **Hometown Heroes**

WE CHANGE LIVES

Targeted Programs



NEW 2021

A Program by Alisha Motiwala Inspired by the STUDENTS Speak Up for Kids Program, PARENTS Speak Up for Kids creates a space for foster parents, caregivers, loved ones, and anyone interested in the foster community, to locate resources and find support. Central to PARENTS Speak Up for Kids is the Healing Hearts Podcast, which brings the mental health needs of foster children to the forefront.



NEW 2021

Ambassadors of Speak Up for Kids are passionate and influential professionals invested in the welfare of children. They act as the conduit between Speak Up for Kids and potential corporate partners, championing child advocacy and collaborating with our Executive Team to bring awareness about child welfare issues to the community.

“We must protect families, we must protect children, who have inalienable rights and should be loved, should be taken care of physically and mentally, and should not be brought into the world only to suffer.”

- INDIRA GANDHI



Too often, victories achieved by foster-involved young people go unnoticed. **Growing Grads**, Speak Up for Kids' premier, three-pronged, milestone-focused program is aimed at celebrating the accomplishments of youth in care:

- 1. Graduation Celebration** - Whether it's a GED, diploma, degree completion, or certificate, we celebrate with and for our kids.
- 2. Gift for Grads** – We rally the community to full swag bags with gift cards and personalized items for our GRADS.
- 3. Celebrating YOUth Scholarship** – The support systems inherent to traditional family

structures aren't in place for the children we serve. These scholarships help bridge the gap and make 'next steps' more attainable.

CONGRATS TO OUR 2021 CELEBRATING YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

CARLOS · EDVIN · ANTONIO · TAMIYAH



CARLOS



EDVIN



ANTONIO



TAMIYAH

WE CHANGE LIVES



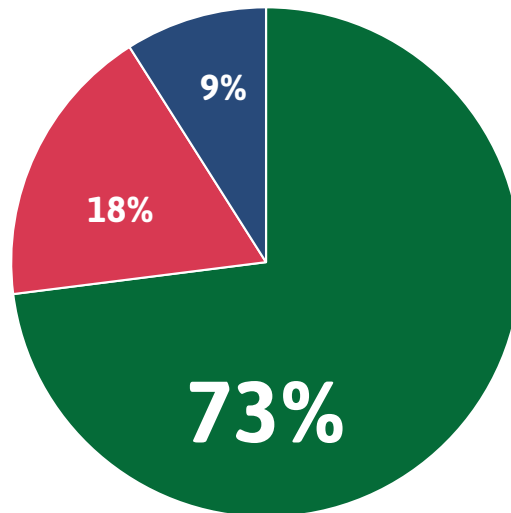
Therapeutic Court

Born out of the idea that courts can “protect, serve justice, and be therapeutic,” primarily related to the most complex cases. Therapeutic Court is a first-of-its-kind, round-table, team approach to advocacy. Through single weekly meetings, every agency involved in the child’s case is represented and is monitored through Judicial oversight.

Early Childhood Court

Early Childhood Court exists to intervene in dependency cases as early as possible to establish safety, permanence, and Normalcy as soon as possible because infant and toddler victims are, sadly, not spared the horror of child victimization and are least able to advocate for themselves.

We are proud to be a supporter of Early Childhood Court (ECC)



- Reached Permanency through Reunification
- Reached Permanency through Permanent Guardianship
- Reached Permanency through Adoption



This self-sustained, initiative-driven program uses a community-wide approach to build awareness of Palm Beach County’s critical foster home shortage and connect potential foster parents with necessary credentialing agencies.

413 Referrals

157 Completed Info Session

67 Completed Class

31 New Foster Homes Licensed (or pending)

“I always wondered why ‘somebody’ doesn’t do something about that. Then I realized I was ‘somebody.’”

- LILY TOMLIN

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION & PERMANENCE

Austin and his sister Vivvy were born addicted to opiates and were adopted by their aunt and uncle when their mother's parental rights were terminated.

When Austin started kindergarten, the school began reporting concerns about his behavior. Sadly, this proved too much for his aunt and uncle, who returned him to state care.

It was then that the court assigned Judy as his volunteer child advocate. Judy worked to get various assessments performed and found a center specializing in play and various other therapies.

Because it was not covered by insurance, Judy looked for other resources, then contacted Speak Up for Kids for the funding needed to get Austin much-needed help.

Fast forward three years, and Austin is thriving in school. AND he has a new forever family.

YOU + US = A Winning Team

“Your hardest times often lead to the greatest moments of your life. Keep going. Tough situations build strong people in the end.”

- UNKNOWN



PLEASE ALLOW US A MOMENT TO

PAT OURSELVES ON THE BACK

Nonprofits First Hats Off Awards

Nonprofit of the Year

(MEDIUM CATEGORY)



Hats Off

Nonprofit Awards

GOODNEWS FLORIDA
LARGEST CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER IN AMERICA

4th Year South Florida

Leading Charity

GOODNEWS MAGAZINE

4th Year

TOP RATED

GREAT NONPROFITS

GREATNONPROFITS

TOP-RATED

NONPROFIT



GUIDESTAR[®]
by **Candid.**

5th Year

Platinum Seal of Transparency

GUIDESTAR/CANDID

EVENT IMPACT



GIFT-A-BIRTHDAY

There is nothing more beautiful than hundreds of adults getting together to raise funds for thousands of children who are often forgotten on the ONE day where they should be most celebrated. Their decision to SPEAK UP succeeded in **raising \$70,000**.



ROBERT & MICHELLE'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Each year, diehard Palm Beach County child advocates Robert and Michelle host a toy drive and FUN & FRIENDraiser to benefit our kids. This year, their efforts **raised \$75,000!** They exemplify the power of community!



SPEAKEASY

This year's roaring 20's themed gala, Speakeasy for Speak Up, featuring the requisite 'gangsters' and 'flappers,' was a rip-roaring success that **raised greater than \$150,000** for local children involved in the foster system.



BETTER-TO-GIVE

Foster-involved children cannot usually shop for loved ones not because they do not have the desire but because they do not have the resources! However, thanks to Target Stores, CMI Air Conditioning & Electrical, and multiple individual donors, **100+ children were paired with personal shoppers who assisted them with buying holiday gifts for those they love most!**



CELESTE JACKSON & FRIENDS

Celeste Jackson – advocate, ally, friend, and doer of all good things in honor of children – came through YET AGAIN by coordinating a bicycle drive. Not only was she able to get **65 bikes donated, but she managed to coordinate assembly**. These bikes represent recreation for some of our children and necessary transportation for so many others.



WINTERFEST

With **greater than 500 children** in attendance, our Stan Klett Sr. Annual Winterfest continues to be a tremendous success drawing youth and families across the county! From face painting to dancing to arts and crafts, this event holds something for EVERYONE and is a cherished, anticipated event.

“Empowering is giving your influence... It’s sharing yourself – your influence, position, power, and opportunities – with others with the purpose of investing in their lives so that they can function at their best.”

- JOHN MAXWELL

THE STORY OF US

We want to thank our community of supporters, sponsors and partners for uniting with us to break the victimization, abuse, and violence cycles in Palm Beach County. Individual supporters and donors, family foundations, and corporate sponsors made every success possible.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS THAT #SPEAKUPFORKIDS

Kathy & Paul Leone
 Ken Thomas
 Vice Mayor Gregg Weiss, Palm Beach County
 Celeste Jackson
 Stan Klett Jr.
 Robert Donohoo & Michelle Stokes

THANK YOU to all of our anonymous donors for your support. We SEE you.

SPONSORS



Good food, Good life



THE JIM MORAN FOUNDATION
 "THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO PREPARE FOR IT."



The Mirasol Foundation, Inc.



Split Rock Foundation



BANANA REPUBLIC



ARTEMIDA EST. 2020



Colleen Mullaney's Estate

Friends of Stan Klett

PARTNERS



SUPPORTING A CHILD'S FUTURE

Roland is 15 years old and is a sophomore in high school. After some educational struggles in middle school, Roland is on track to complete his high school career and is looking forward to college. However, his guidance counselor told him that he would need to take the **SAT** and **ACTs** in his junior year as part of his college aspirations.

Roland's Guardian ad Litem, also serving as his educational surrogate for the past three years, was aware of Roland's anxiety around taking tests and found one-on-one test preparation services to help ready him for both exams. In addition, his Guardian ad Litem asked for assistance to cover the **costs of enrollment, materials, and transportation.**

Our response? Of course! But only because of YOU.

“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.”

- MALCOM X



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
COLLEEN MULLANEY



On July 21, 2021, we lost our beloved friend and board member, Colleen Mullaney, a fierce advocate for children. Over the years, Colleen donated her time, talent, and treasure, supporting thousands of local children. Her passing leaves a tremendous void, not only at **Speak Up for Kids** but in the Palm Beach County community.

Formal Obituary

Colleen Mullaney passed away peacefully at her home in Islamorada, Florida, on July 21, 2021. Colleen is survived by her husband, Robert Mullaney, her parents, Frances and Dennis Mullaney of Middletown, New Jersey, her sister and brother-in-law, Joanne and Barry Edison, and her beloved niece and nephew, Paige and Todd Edison of Wayside, New Jersey. She will also be greatly missed by her three cherished dogs, Buddy, Gidget, and Teddy.

Colleen was born on Staten Island, New York, and moved to New Jersey at the age of six. She attended Saint Mary's Elementary School and Middletown North High School. She graduated from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in 1988.

As a child, Colleen was an excellent student, loved country music, playing guitar, fishing and boating, and loved taking charge as the big sister. She was enthusiastic in her role as Auntie, and there was nothing she would not do for her niece and nephew, including taking them to Point Pleasant Beach for hermit crabs and countless other adventures. Her advice came easily and was always appreciated by her sister, Joanne. There was never an instance Colleen didn't jump in to help in every aspect of her family's life.

She excelled in all her endeavors, including professionally. Initially, Colleen worked in the field of dentistry. However, she spent most of her successful career in banking. Her most recent position was Senior Vice President of Healthcare Financial Services for TD Bank.

**“I say go full throttle
and call it a day.”**

- CARLA HALL

YOU

have helped to position

US

to move

FULL THROTTLE into 2022 -2023.

TOGETHER

we will continue to achieve incredible gains –
all in service to children who depend on

US

to bridge the gaps to safety, security, and permanence!



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