



# All Star Children's Foundation

By **Anne Weintraub** -  
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For over 30 years, Graci McGillicuddy has dreamed of building a brighter future in foster care. Now, with the support of her husband Dennis, and in collaboration with Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, her dream is coming true.

The All Star Children's Foundation (All Star) will demolish existing buildings on its new location on 17th Street in Sarasota to make way for the most sophisticated trauma-informed care campus for foster children in the country. It will be on five acres and will house a 12,000 square foot center for treatment and therapy programs, including the Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital brain science research program led by its Psychological Trauma Director, Dr. Kristin Hoffman. The brain science research program will focus on how childhood trauma affects the brain, its potential for healing in conjunction with trauma-informed care, and track long-term results in the children All Star serves. The treatment, therapies, programs and services provided in the center will be available to children who reside on campus and to children within the foster care system on an outpatient basis.

All Star's mission is to help children heal from the trauma of child abuse, including, but not limited to sexual, mental, and substance abuse using trauma-informed care. According to the National Center For Trauma-Informed Care, the care for trauma is in a more supportive, comprehensively integrated and empowering environment for trauma survivors. "Our goal is to get to the root of the child's trauma, help them heal, and teach them that they have the power to make specific, positive choices about their behavior, freeing them from the victimization of their past. They will have coping strategies for life and can build trust and self-worth," explains Lucia Branton, All Star's Executive Director.

The children served are from birth to age 18, and unfortunately, the statistics warrant grave concern. According to Lindsey Mullet, All Star's Director of Programs, more than 4,000 babies were born addicted to opioids in Florida in 2016, an increase of over 1,000 percent from a decade ago. Further, 51% of the general population in the United States have experienced trauma in childhood. "There are so many alarming statistics, says Mullet. 77 percent of children who die from child abuse in Florida are under the age of four. The separation of family members is also disconcerting. 50 percent of the siblings who are removed from home are separated when they

are placed in foster care.” All Star’s foster homes were specifically designed with the space to accommodate sibling groups so brothers and sisters can remain together.

The campus will also include a community center that includes a learning lab, library, computer lab, large kitchen for preparing group meals, space for birthday parties and gatherings, and recreational space. The treatment center and administration building where therapies and services will be provided will showcase a huge aquarium in the lobby and a children’s boutique on the first floor. Children from the foster care system in our community will be able to shop, free of charge, for clothes, school supplies, and other necessities. There will be a playground, garden, and an outdoor movie theatre. All Star will house its foster parents and children on the campus in six single-family style, licensed foster homes.

According to the Florida Division of Children and Families, all foster parents must attend an orientation; complete 20-30 hours of foster parent training; have a child abuse and criminal background check and participate in a home inspection and study to review readiness for fostering. All Star adds the additional requirement that its foster parents, like its therapists, Board of Directors, and all staff are trained in trauma-informed care. The foster children All Star serves are children who are removed from their homes because of various types of neglect and/or abuse. First, the children are entered into the Florida Division of Children and Families system and then the Y.M.C.A. is responsible to place them in a foster home. Whether a foster child comes to All Star or another foster home will depend on bed availability. Treatment and counseling can still be offered on an outpatient basis for children who do not reside on campus.

All Star anticipates the foster children will stay on campus for an average of four to five months. Because each child is different, care and treatment will be customized. At the end of the child’s stay, it is All Star’s goal to reunite them with their parents. If it’s not possible, some children will be placed in the care of a relative, otherwise known as kinship care. If there is no family available to care for the child, the Y.M.C.A. will work with All Star staff to identify a foster home and assist in the transition of that child into the home by training foster parents on trauma informed parenting techniques. All Star’s outpatient programs and services would remain available if additional resources were needed.

All Star is a non-profit, 501 (c)(3) public charity. Beth Bush, Vice President of Philanthropy for All Star, asks members of the community who have a special place in their heart for children to consider supporting All Star. She says, “we always need volunteers to assist with programs and services, fundraising, events, marketing and communications. We are also half way to our goal in our capital campaign and need this community to help get us to the finish line. We are not just putting up buildings. We will be helping children heal and create a template for successful programs like this throughout the Country.” Please contact All Star at 941-216-5605 for more information.



[www.AllStarChildrensFoundation.org](http://www.AllStarChildrensFoundation.org)