NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT

Families First focuses efforts on prevention and early intervention

What does your organization do?

For over 32 years, Families First of Palm Beach County has empowered families with children prenatal to age 22 to grow strong in every way. Families First is a leading South Florida children's social service agency, serving more than 1,100 families each year, with its main goals being healthy birth outcomes, healthy child and family development, school readiness, access to mental health services, to strengthen the family unit and increase safety through quality services.

Swindler

How does your agency benefit the community?

Many of the families served by Families First struggle with domestic violence, homelessness, drug, or alcohol abuse, mental or physical health issues, or a simple change in circumstances that left them unable to cope.

With seven programs, Families First helps them build on their strengths and designs individualized plans that meet each family's specific needs. Each year, Families First of Palm Beach County assists more than 2,600 Palm Beach County adults and children.

By providing prevention and early intervention services, we can prevent child abuse, physical and behavioral health issues, pregnancies with poor outcomes, and ensure children are ready for school at kindergarten.

By addressing these issues before they occur, Families First saves taxpayers millions in costs of special education, delinquency, and dependency services; as well as changing generational cycles of abuse and neglect that cause trauma and suffering for children and families in Palm Beach County.

What is your agency's focus for the future?

Since its founding in 1990, Families First has prided itself in responding to the changing needs of our community.

A recent shower provided through the Familes First of Palm Beach County's TOPWA program. PHOTOS PROVIDED

Over the past decade we have seen that mental health and behavioral health issues are impacting the lives of many children and their families, so we committed our organization to get even more involved. We do so by intervening during a child's early years, prenatal to age 5, before behavioral or emerging mental health issues become a life-long challenge affecting school performance, family life, and relationships.

In all our programs and services, prevention and early intervention are our goals — both to minimize effects on the child and family and to save us all the future costs of poor outcomes, such as involvement with the criminal justice system, dependency system, school failure, and ongoing health and mental health issues.

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How can the community help?

When we receive urgent requests from the families we serve, we do our best to respond with client service funds we set aside. Funds for such services are limited, so community financial support helps us continue to help those who need us.

For every dollar that is donated, $7 is saved in long-term care, significantly impacting a Palm Beach County child.

Additionally, we accept donated items for mothers and babies; a wish list of items can be found on our website, www.familiesfirstpbc.org.

Finally, we have several volunteer committees where you can play an active part in carrying out the mission of Families First in serving the most marginalized residents throughout Palm Beach County.

For information regarding donations and volunteer opportunities, contact Peter Thate at 561-318-4219.

— *Contributed*

Want to share information about your nonprofit? Send an email to neighborhood@pbpost.com with "Nonprofit Spotlight" in the subject line and we'll give you the details on what we need to share your story.

Mission statement

Empowering families of all histories and challenges to grow strong in every way.

Key programs

- **TOPWA** assists high-risk pregnant women in securing medical support with the goal of healthy birth outcomes free from HIV and drug exposure.
- **Infant Mental Health Services** works closely with parents as they support their child's (birth to age 3) developing capacity to experience, regulate, and express emotions and explore and master their environment through close and secure interpersonal relationships.
- **Child First** is an intensive, early childhood, home-visiting intervention that works to decrease serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among high-risk, very young children and their families.
- **Healthy Families**, a national evidence-based program, helps strengthen families and ensure healthy childhood development.
- **Behavioral Health Services** provides for the physical, developmental, and emotional well-being of children and families.
- **Kin Support Project** assists families who are raising a loved one's children who have lost a parent due to death, incarceration, abandonment, or an inability to parent.
- **Bridges to Success** provides safe and affordable housing for those addressing the frequently interrelated problems of chronic homelessness, drug addiction, mental illness, and other disabilities impairing functioning.

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