



★ Awards and Recognitions ★



Erin Smeltzer, President and CEO, is the 2022 recipient of the CDA Council for Professional Recognition Advocacy Award. Congratulations, Erin, you are most deserving of this prestigious award!



Liz Randall, Statewide Director of Help Me Grow® Florida, has been selected to serve as a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Act Early Ambassador to Florida. Kudos, Liz!



Congratulations to **Courtney Lee**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, who was accepted into the University of Florida's Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Certificate Graduate Program!



UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



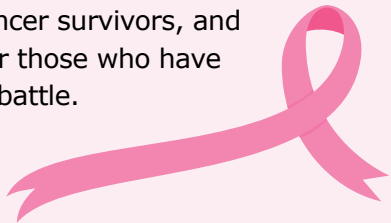
April Scarborough, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, has been accepted into the University of Florida's Educational Sciences bachelor's degree program! Way to go, April!

★ Celebrations and Holidays ★



On October 25, we wore green in recognition of Dwarfism Awareness Day that celebrates differences and spreads positive awareness for achondroplasia, a bone growth disorder that causes dwarfism.

Employees wore pink on October 28 in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to promote the impact of breast cancer, spread awareness about early detection, celebrate breast cancer survivors, and remember those who have lost their battle.



We celebrated Halloween with a potluck breakfast and creative costumes!

★ Celebrations and Holidays ★



Ashley Casey, Data and Training Coordinator, had a beautiful Forum baby shower to celebrate the upcoming arrival of baby Avery who made her debut on December 19! Avery weighed 6 pounds, 9 ounces and was 19 3/4 inches long. Mom and baby are doing great, and big sister, Olivia, was excited to hold Avery. Congratulations, Ashley! We can't wait to meet Avery.



Courtney Lee, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, had a blast celebrating her son, James, who turns 2-years-old on Dec 21! James had a party with cupcakes and enjoyed the day with his family and friends. Happy Birthday, James!



Lori Stegmeyer, Chief Programs Officer, is excited to welcome a new grandson! Her daughter, Blair, and son-in-law, Garret, are officially adopting a boy named Devontay in early 2023. Devontay asked that this beautiful moment be near his birthday on February 16. Best wishes, Lori, on your growing family!

Family



April Scarborough (Wigsten), Workforce Initiatives Specialist, got married to Eric Scarborough on November 10 at The Venue at Lilly Lou's in Trenton, Georgia! With a beautiful view of the mountains and Cloudland Canyon, the Scarboroughs exchanged vows in front of their family, friends, and dog, Omar. Best wishes to the Scarboroughs for a lifetime of love and happiness.



Margot Mooney, the oldest daughter of **Denise Bishop**, Chief Programs Officer, never shies away from an adventure or an opportunity to learn and grow. Margot has decided to renew her contract to  teach English to high school students in South Korea. For the first time since 2020, she will return to the US for a quick trip in January! Denise and her family are very much looking forward to the time they will all have together! While FaceTime has certainly been a blessing over the last several years, there is nothing quite like a real-live hug!

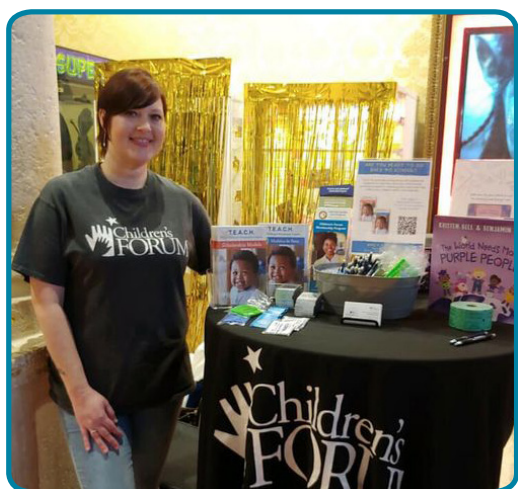


Conferences and Events



Martha Grant, Workforce Initiatives Coordinator, along with Workforce Initiatives Specialists **Jessica Long** and **Lolita Hawkins**, were proud to represent the Forum as Exhibitors and Presenters at the 2022 Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAAYC) Annual Conference that was held October 12-16 in Jacksonville, Florida.

Kiki Carter, Workforce Initiatives Director, and **Courtney Lee**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, are part of the Forum's Early Childhood Policy WORKS Advocacy Fellowship (ECPWAF) program. They, along with other Policy Fellows, had a lot of fun visiting the Capitol on October 10. The ECPWAF program guides novice early learning advocates through the legislative process and how the system works. These Fellows will "graduate" as advocacy experts during Children's Week in March 2023. We can't wait to see Kiki and Courtney in action!



Lisa Carson, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, had a great time at the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard 2022 Annual Provider Conference September 17. The event's theme was Dazzling Stars. Lisa enjoyed the opportunity to travel and meet ELC staff and early educators in the area.



The Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) team was the co-host of the Annual HMG National Forum, September 19-22, 2022. **Liz Randall**, Statewide Director of HMGF, moderated a general session panel of Florida stakeholders including **Erin Smeltzer**, President and CEO, **Denise Bishop**, Chief Operations Officer, and other state leaders. Liz also facilitated a networking session on messaging HMG with four HMGF affiliates. It was a great opportunity for HMGF to be recognized on a National stage!

Forum Activities

Forum Pajama Party and Holiday Luncheon!

We had a wonderful time at the Forum's Holiday Pajama Party and Luncheon! Delicious food, a holiday-themed trivia game, and a Dirty Santa gift exchange were all part of the fun. Thank you to everyone who also donated gifts for our local Toys for Tots community drive.







Happy
Holidays



Forum Family Holiday Photos and Bloopers



James Cain, son of **Laura Cain**, Workforce Initiatives Director, did not want to participate in his family's annual Christmas photos! Things did not go as planned when James ran away from Santa. The looks on James's and Santa's faces were priceless, and Laura will have many laughs at this photo for years to come.



Some children are scared or shy when meeting Santa in person. Leona Randall, who is 3-years-old, and daughter of **Liz Randall**, HMGF Statewide Director, is usually so cheerful and outgoing, but was so serious meeting Santa. She would not crack a smile!



Ian Sorondo, son of **Lianne Betancourt**, Miami QIS Coordinator, can read many of the words in "How The Grinch Stole Christmas," but was terrified to meet the Grinch in person. The five-year-old held on to his light necklace for dear life. On the other hand, Ian's cousin couldn't wait to get a picture with the Grinch. The difference in their expressions cracks Lianne up!



Quint Brown, son of **Jenna Brown**, Communications Director, did not enjoy his first visit with Santa Claus. He is almost 13-years-old now, and had many successful visits with Santa when he believed in Christmas magic. This photo remains one of Jenna's favorite family holiday memories.



Forum Family Holiday Photos and Bloopers



Unlike some Forum Family members, James Lee, son of **Courtney Lee**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, was all smiles when he and his dad went to visit Santa. We hope Santa brings everything James wants for Christmas!



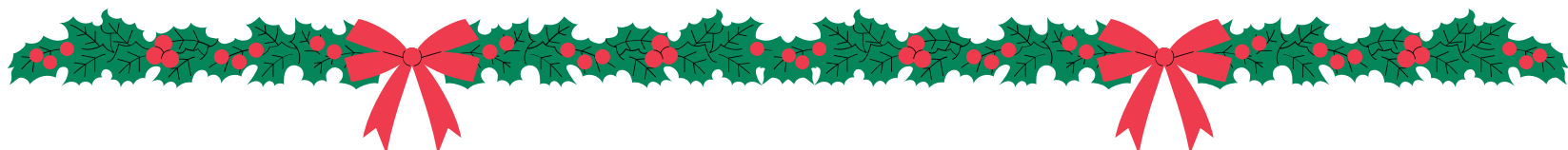
April Scarborough, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, posed with her family in matching pajamas. As a newlywed, this will be a special holiday season for April. Best wishes to April and her family!



The Forum's Pajama Party and Holiday Luncheon included some funny bloopers. **Laura Cain**, Workforce Initiatives Director, was not ready to have her photo taken, but her pal **Kiki Carter**, also a Workforce Initiatives Director, was camera ready!



Jinan Higginbotham, Outreach Director, was ready to pose in her family photo during the Forum's Holiday Pajama Party and Holiday Luncheon! Their son, Tripp, had no interest in the camera, and husband EJ was distracted while trying to get the little one to cooperate!





Shout Outs!



"Thank you to everyone who participated in the Toys for Tots program! Operated by the United States Marine Corps Reserve, Toys for Tots distributes toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them gifts for Christmas. Your generous spirits are amazing!"

-Children's Forum Morale Committee

"I would like to send a big shout out to everyone who contributed to Devontay's Christmas Wish List. My daughter is so grateful for your support of welcoming Devontay to his Forever Family. Thanks to you, he is going to have a wonderful holiday."

-Lori Stegmeyer

★ Thank you!

"We would like to give a shout out to **Paul Robinson** for helping the Help Me Grow team develop their new website. Paul has been so helpful and so quick with the MANY changes we have requested. Thank you for all of your hard work on this project!"

-HMGF Team

Join us at the Capitol!

SAVE THE DATE!



MARCH 26-31 2023






MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

As the organizing partner for Children's Week Florida™ we're so excited for next year's event. Stay tuned for ways to get involved and volunteer in 2023. #EveryChildMatters"



Welcome Newbies!



Kim Anderson

Quality Improvement Specialist

- Loves the outdoors and anything in nature
- Likes to compete in Archery competitions and learning the ins and outs of the sport
- Enjoys going to new places and trying new restaurants and cuisines



Trace Cooper

IT Programmer

- Is the father of 4-year-old son, Benjamin, and soon-to-be daughter, Olivia, that he and his wife, Ashley, are expecting in January 2023
- Moved to Tallahassee in 2015 and worked at FSU for seven years before joining the Forum
- Loves computers and sports, especially college football



Lianne Betancourt

Miami QIS Coordinator

- Trained her cat to give high fives, sit, come, and turn around
- Enjoys hanging out with her neighbors in her spare time
- Likes to garden, cook, and spend time drawing with her son



Yolanda Gaston

Professional Development Specialist

- Loves to read a variety of interesting tales and books
- Was born and raised in Haiti
- Is the middle child in her family



Terri Brusca

Financial Assistant

- Loves traveling to new places
- Enjoys spending time with her three grandchildren
- Has a green thumb with a home garden full of plants and flowers



Taylor Googe

IT Programmer

- Is a beekeeper
- Enjoys gardening
- Has a tri-pod (three-legged) cat



Cynthia Christie

Workforce Initiatives Specialist

- Loves to kayak
- Enjoys anything in the great outdoors
- Loves to grow flowers, vegetables, and fruit trees in her garden



Xandria Griffin

Workforce Initiatives Specialist

- Has a 2-year-old son named Ayden
- Loves to bake
- Knows how to play the flute



Welcome Newbies!



Kali Lachance

Workforce Initiatives Analyst

- Has a 3-year-old Golden Retriever named Woody
- Loves to travel and hike
- Was born on February 29th, which makes her a leap year baby



Jennifer Sadberry

Front Desk Assistant

- Loves to travel and visit new places
- Has two sports-loving children (you can typically find her at a sporting event)
- Enjoys a good puzzle in her downtime



Nydia Martinez

Workforce Initiatives Analyst

- Enjoys spending time with her beautiful daughter, Avery, who keeps her on her toes
- Is terrified of roller coasters, but will still get on them for the adrenaline rush
- Is 17 years older than her youngest sister



Erin Smeltzer

President and CEO

- Is a soccer, basketball, volleyball, football, and baseball mom to her children, Ellis and Bennett
- Loves to cheer for the University of Georgia, her alma mater. Go Dawgs!
- Enjoys spending time with her husband, Wil, and members of the women's ministry at her church



Dawnielle McNabb

Quality Improvement Specialist

- Loves being a wife and mom of two boys, ages 2 and 5
- Is passionate about children and early learning
- Enjoys Florida's beaches, parks, wildlife, and weather



Dana Trabulsy

Public Relations and Special Projects Director

- Likes to cook authentic Lebanese food
- Watches Tik Tok videos to relax
- Loves to listen to real crime podcasts and is a *Dateline* junkie



Stephanie Miller

Quality Improvement Specialist

- Adopted her daughters, Ryan and Charley, from foster care in 2020
- Enjoys learning languages and has studied Spanish, Latin, and Korean
- Loves public speaking, teaching, and presenting at conferences

