

# Forum Focus

WHERE THE FOCUS IS ON YOU!



Summer  
2024

## Happy Graduation!



Sabena Gaddy, daughter of **Wioleta Gaddy**, Sr. Dir. of Contracts and Grants, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Affairs from VUB, a small university in Brussels, Belgium! She plans to complete an internship in EU Parliament and begin courses for a Master's program in the Netherlands.

Bridget Mooney, daughter of **Denise Bishop**, Executive Chief of Staff, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English! As a previous T.E.A.C.H. Scholar, Bridget has chosen to pursue a career in early childhood education and is teaching a class of two and three-year-old children at Ivy Hill Academy in Tallahassee.



Emma Romuald, daughter of **Brenda Romuald**, HMGF Coordinator, graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology! She will attend James Madison University in Virginia for graduate school.

# Happy Graduation cont'd!



Hailey McEllhenney, daughter of **Melissa Clements**, Chief Strategy Officer, and Bennett Smeltzer, son of **Erin Smeltzer**, President and CEO, graduated from the 5th grade at Killearn Lakes Elementary School in Tallahassee! They will attend Deerlake Middle School in the fall.



James Cain, son of **Laura Cain**, Sr. Dir. of Workforce Initiatives, graduated from VPK! He can't wait for kindergarten at Florida State University School.

Mason Romuald, son of **Brenda Romuald**, graduated from Lincoln High School in Tallahassee! He will follow in his big sister's footsteps and attend Florida State University in the fall.

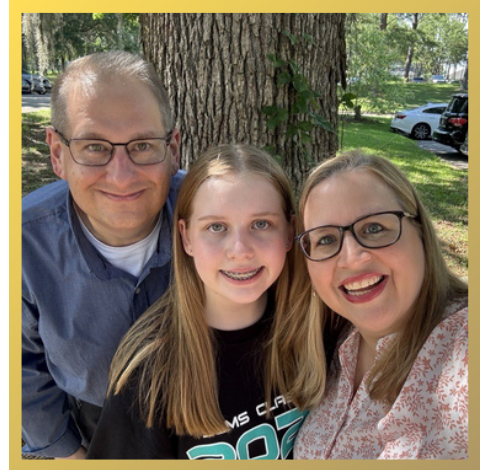


# Happy Graduation cont'd!



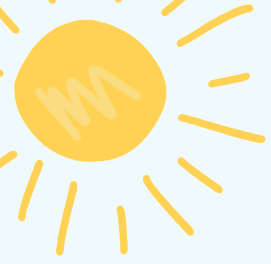
Ellis Smeltzer and Kendall Sadberry, daughters of **Erin Smeltzer**, and **Jennifer Sadberry**, Front Office and Membership Services Assistant, graduated from the 8th grade at Deerlake Middle School in Tallahassee! They look forward to attending Chiles High School.

**Lisa Roberts**, Sr. Dir. of Assessment & Coaching Services, announced the promotion of her daughter Sydney from Swift Creek Middle School in Tallahassee! She is excited to join her big brother at Lincoln High School.



**Courtney Lee**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, earned a graduate certificate in Early Care and Education Policy from the University of Florida!





# SUMMER TIME FUN!

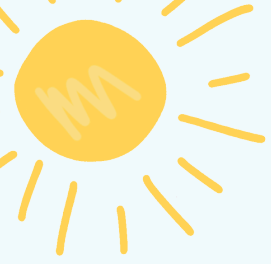


**April Wigsten**, Sr. Workforce Initiatives Specialist, had a busy summer! She enjoyed fishing with her children in Cape San Blas, celebrating fellow Forum employee Dedra Ash's birthday in Thomasville, GA, and attending a Tyler Childers concert with her son.



**Wioleta Gaddy** and her family visited Brussels to attend her daughter's college graduation. After the ceremony, they discovered a couple of beautiful towns in Belgium. They toured historical sites and the EU Parliament, taste tested many Belgium Waffles, dined at amazing local restaurants, and marveled at the canal filled town of Bruges which is also known as Venice of the North.





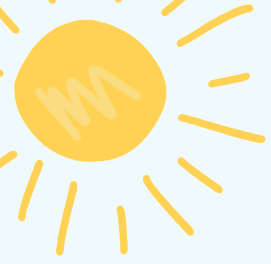
# SUMMER TIME FUN CONT'D!



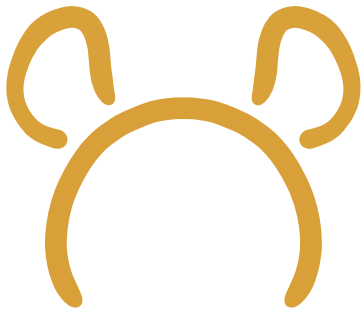
**Lisa Roberts** traveled to Ireland and Scotland with her husband to celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary. They visited castles, monasteries, and cathedrals dating back to the 8th century (or earlier), attended a performance of Riverdance, enjoyed sampling regional cuisine and drink, searched for the Loch Ness Monster, and hiked over 50 miles of gorgeous terrain.



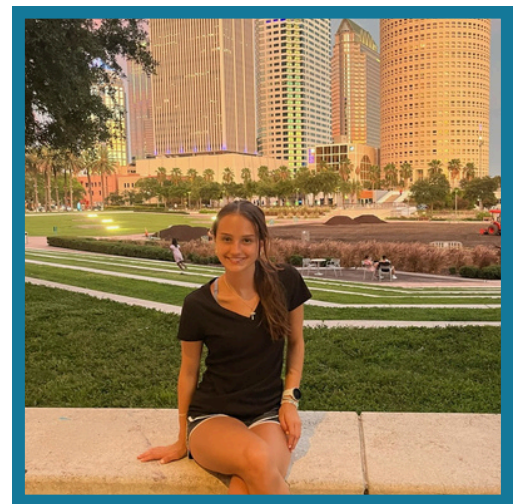
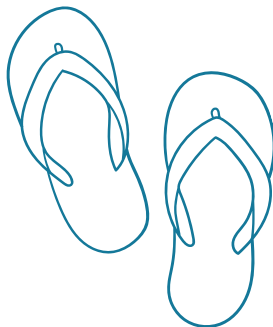
**Jenna Brown**, Communications Dir., had the adventure of a lifetime with her family in the dog-friendly and earth-conscious state of Colorado. They enjoyed the breathtaking beauty of Colorado Springs, Rocky Mountain National Park, Royal Gorge, Red Rocks, and the city of Denver.



# SUMMER TIME FUN CONT'D!



**Aly Avila**, Outreach Specialist, and her family travelled to Walt Disney World in Orlando! Disney World is one of Aly's favorite places on earth, and the annual passes come in extra handy when she wants to visit Mickey Mouse and friends.



**Melissa Clements** and her daughters had a wonderful time relaxing in Tampa! They went to the beach, walked around the downtown area, and toured an art museum.



# ★ Recognitions & Achievements ★



**Flor Brito**, ELCC Program Dir., was invited to be the FCCPC graduation speaker at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus! She was honored to be with all 34 graduates celebrating this great achievement and representing the Forum. Out of the 34 graduates, 33 of them received an ELCC scholarship.



**Lisa Carson**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, is a proud Marine Mom! Her son, Lance Corporal Connor Kennedy, is stationed in Okinawa Japan, and is currently on a short deployment in South Korea.



**Ashley Houk**, HMGF Data Coordinator, had the honor of representing the program at the National Collaboration for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT) Prenatal-to-Three Five State Power Sharing Convening in Little Rock, AR. During this meeting, early education industry delegates from Florida, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama discussed the needs of, and lack of, support for children and families as well as efforts needed to ensure that legislative efforts are maximized through advocacy.



# Recognitions & Achievements cont'd!



Margot Mooney, daughter of **Denise Bishop**, was accepted into a Master's Degree program in Applied Linguistics at the University of Oxford in England. Margot will follow both of her dreams at the same time as she pursues her graduate studies virtually and continues to teach English to high school students in South Korea. Best of all, Denise and her husband Carl are traveling to Europe and will get a chance to catch up with Margot in Oxford when she is there for her weeklong orientation.



Sydney Roberts, daughter of **Lisa Roberts**, was a finalist in the Leon County Best and Brightest 8th Grade Essay contest this past Spring. Way to go, Sydney!



## Shout Outs!



**“Kudos to the ELCC team for awarding double the scholarships last quarter!”**

-Melissa Clements, Chief Strategy Officer

**“Way to go ACSU team for supporting over 20 funders and 4,500 classrooms with assessments, coaching, and training!”**

-Melissa Clements, Chief Strategy Officer





# Bridal Shower!



On March 22, we showered **Lolita Hawkins**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, with best wishes and gifts on her upcoming nuptials! She married Albert Blacks on April 26. Congratulations to the newlyweds who reside in Texas.







# Baby Showers!



On March 29, we celebrated **Lindsey Smith**, Executive Coordinator, and the upcoming arrival of her baby girl! Shiloh Campbell Smith was born on April 18, 2024 (see Baby Boom page for more details about baby Shiloh).







# Baby Showers cont'd!



We honored **Angel Kreucher**, Graphic Designer, and the anticipated arrival of her baby girl! Lucia Grace Orellana was born on June 6, 2024 (see Baby Boom page for more details about baby Lucia).







# Baby Sprinkle!



We sprinkled **Trace Cooper**, IT programmer, and his family with diapers and other essentials for the upcoming arrival of their daughter! Sadie June Cooper was born on July 24, 2024 (see Baby Boom page for more details about baby Sadie).







# Baby Boom!



**Laure Fiotte**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, is expecting! Her new baby, anticipated to arrive this fall, will join big brother Dan Jr. and sister Khanza.

The adorable Shiloh Campbell Smith, daughter of **Lindsey Smith**, was born on April 18, 2024. She loves her big brothers, playing on the floor, being outside, and bath time!



**Angel Kreucher** gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Lucia Grace Orellana was born on June 6, 2024 at 8:54 AM. She weighed in at 6 lb. 2 oz. Mom, dad, and baby are doing great!

**Trace Cooper** is the proud father of Sadie June Cooper. This cutie was born on July 24, 2024 at 8:18 AM. She weighed in at 6 lbs 5 oz and was 18 inches long.

# Conference Time!



**Martha Grant**, Workforce Initiatives Coordinator, and **Olivia Guisti**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, were happy to discuss T.E.A.C.H. and INCENTIVE\$ with early educators at the ELC of Hillsborough County's Teacher's Night Out event!



The **Help Me Grow Florida team** coordinated a fantastic Annual Meeting in Orlando this past April! They were humbled to speak, network, and learn alongside Help Me Grow affiliates from across the state. In addition, **Erin Smeltzer** and **Dana Trabulsy**, Special Projects Outreach Lead, were among the presenters at the meeting.



**Doretta Williams**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, and **Dedra Ash**, Sr. Workforce Initiatives Specialist, were excited to share information about Forum programs at the ELC of the Big Bend Conference.



**T.E.A.C.H., Outreach & Communication, and INCENTIVE\$ team members** had a great time at the National Early Childhood Education Workforce Convening! They engaged in conversations, ideas and strategies that support early education systems.

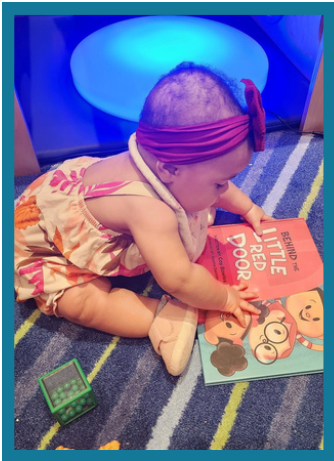


**Kiki Peters**, Workforce Initiatives Director, and **Tami Fletcher**, Workforce Initiatives Specialist, were all smiles as they shared resources and services provided by the Forum at the ELC of the Emerald Coast Conference.



# One Goal Summer Conference!

A large group of Forum employees had a wonderful time at the One Goal Summer Conference in Tampa! They presented at conference sessions, hosted information tables in the exhibit hall, welcomed this year's FECAF advocates, met program participants, connected with colleagues and former Forum employees, made new acquaintances, took their families to visit exhibitors, and more.





# One Goal Summer Conference cont'd!







# Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> 2024

Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> is one of our favorite events of the year! As the organizing partner for this annual initiative, the Forum is proud to host the largest event held in the state that celebrates children, youth, and advocates. Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> is held each year during the legislative session and thousands of attendees come together to deliver the message that every child should be healthy, ready to learn, and able to achieve their full potential.

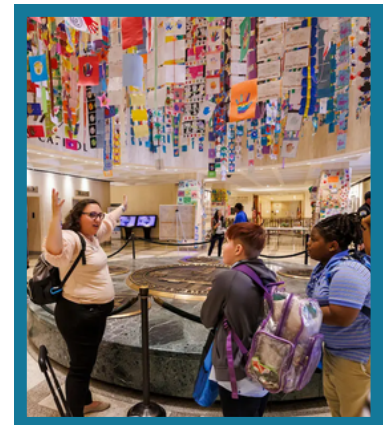
We are incredibly thankful for the Forum crew who dedicated their time to assist with Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> events and activities. From helping to hang children's artwork at Celebration of the Hands, volunteering/decorating at the Advocacy Dinner & Awards Ceremony, distributing lunches during Children's Day at the Capitol, reading to children at Storybook Village/Legislator Lane, and everything in between, they helped to make our 2024 week of advocacy a success.







# Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> 2024 cont'd!







# Children's Week Florida<sup>TM</sup> 2024 cont'd!



We are thrilled to announce the dates for next year's event! Mark your calendars and join us April 13-18 2025, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of this wonderful advocacy initiative.

Children's  
**WEEK**  
*Because Every Child Matters*

**SAVE  
THE DATE!**

**APRIL 13-18,  
2025**

#KeepBloomingCWFL

Scan now to  
learn more!





# Welcome Newbies!



**Bailey Bradner**

Outreach Analyst

- Has six siblings and is the oldest
- Wants to travel the world
- Is on her way to becoming a pediatric nurse



**Matthew Damron**

HMGF Contract Coordinator

- Is originally from the hills of Eastern Kentucky
- Has been married for 8 years to wife Kristi, and they have 2 daughters (Emma Lou, age 6 & Claire, age 4)
- Has a lifelong love for basketball and just picked up pickleball as a hobby



**Jacque Gilliam**

HMGF Outreach Specialist

- Has two sons, Collin and Seth, and one dog who thinks she's human
- Loves to read, bake, travel, and sleep in
- Grew up in CA and moved to FL for husband's (Drew) job. They have been married for 18 years.



**Penney Norton**

Workforce Initiatives Senior Director

- Enjoys watching baseball, football, volleyball, and rodeos
- Watches *Jeopardy!* every night
- Loves crime shows



**David Register**

Workforce Initiatives Senior Director

- Loves being married to Mandy, his wonderful wife
- Has a personal goal to visit every National Park and Monument
- Owns several booths locally where he resells vintage and antique furniture, art, glass, and collectibles



We also welcome **Randee Gabriel**, *HMGF Contract Compliance Coordinator*, to the Forum Team!