



Impact Report



Care Connect+

For the Life of the Community



Flagler Health+



Letter from the Executive Director

IT IS WITH A TREMENDOUS SENSE OF GRATITUDE THAT I SHARE THIS IMPACT REPORT FILLED WITH THE STORIES OF PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES WE HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO TOUCH, THROUGH OUR WORK AT CARE CONNECT+.

From housing the homeless, to feeding the hungry, to counseling those in despair, these transformative moments have only been possible through the steadfast commitment of Flagler Health+, the unwavering support of our dedicated community partners and the compassionate care of our team members at Care Connect+.

What was once a singularly focused medication assistance program is now a full service social health organization with a network of more than 70 agencies, serving seven counties across Northeast Florida. This rapid growth is bittersweet, because it shines a light on the significant need for social health services that exists across our region. I know it is hard for some people to imagine that in today's world local children are going hungry, heart patients are struggling without their medication, veterans are living in the streets, and families are navigating unfathomable crises — but, thankfully, our team is here to help.

Every day, our care navigators meet new people with new challenges, and it is our privilege to serve as their social health partner on life's journey. While we are incredibly proud of our successes, we know there is still much work to be done. I hope this report provides some insight into our work and inspires you to get involved in some way, whether through volunteerism, financial support or even referring someone you know who needs some help.

To our network partners, to our Board and to the leadership at Flagler Health+, I say thank you. None of this would be possible without you.

Sincerely,

John Eaton / Executive Director





A New Approach to Community Health

Care Connect+ is transforming the way communities address social determinants of health. By seamlessly connecting people with vital resources like stable housing, food pantries, counseling services and transportation, our care navigators are breaking down barriers and ensuring that all people have the opportunity to live their best life, no matter the circumstances.

How do we do it? We put people at the center of all that we do. Whether it's our provider partners, our clients, their families, local government or area businesses, it's our relationships that set us apart. And we nurture them through collaboration, coordination and personalized experiences supported by innovative technology. We are building healthier communities, one connection at a time.

ABOUT FLAGLER HEALTH+

Care Connect+ was established by Flagler Health+ — a total care enterprise aimed at advancing the physical, social and economic health of Northeast Florida communities. From working with area schools, to addressing youth behavioral health, to bringing a new concept in health villages throughout the region, Flagler Health+ is building healthier communities. Flagler Health+ is an extension of Flagler Hospital, which has a 130-year legacy of caring for the community.





Single Point of Contact + Countless Resources

When you need help, sometimes getting started is the hardest part. Care Connect+ offers a unified entry point to access the services of more than 90 community-based providers. We understand that every client need is different. Through a compassionate and thorough assessment process, our care navigators uncover individual and family needs and support them throughout the referral and services continuum.



“ My family was struggling and Care Connect helped me get all the resources I needed for my family. They delivered us food, helped me pay the rent and connected me to mental health services. I was at the end of my rope. Thanks to Care Connect+, there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

– Terrance



Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis

THERE'S NO BETTER EXAMPLE OF HOW CARE CONNECT+ ACTS AS A CENTRAL HUB IN THE COMMUNITY THAN OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Since the global health crisis began in March 2020, our team has worked closely with all of our partner agencies to help meet the unique needs brought on by the virus. From helping residents access testing and financial assistance, to providing follow-up care and lifesaving vaccines, our team has risen to the challenge.

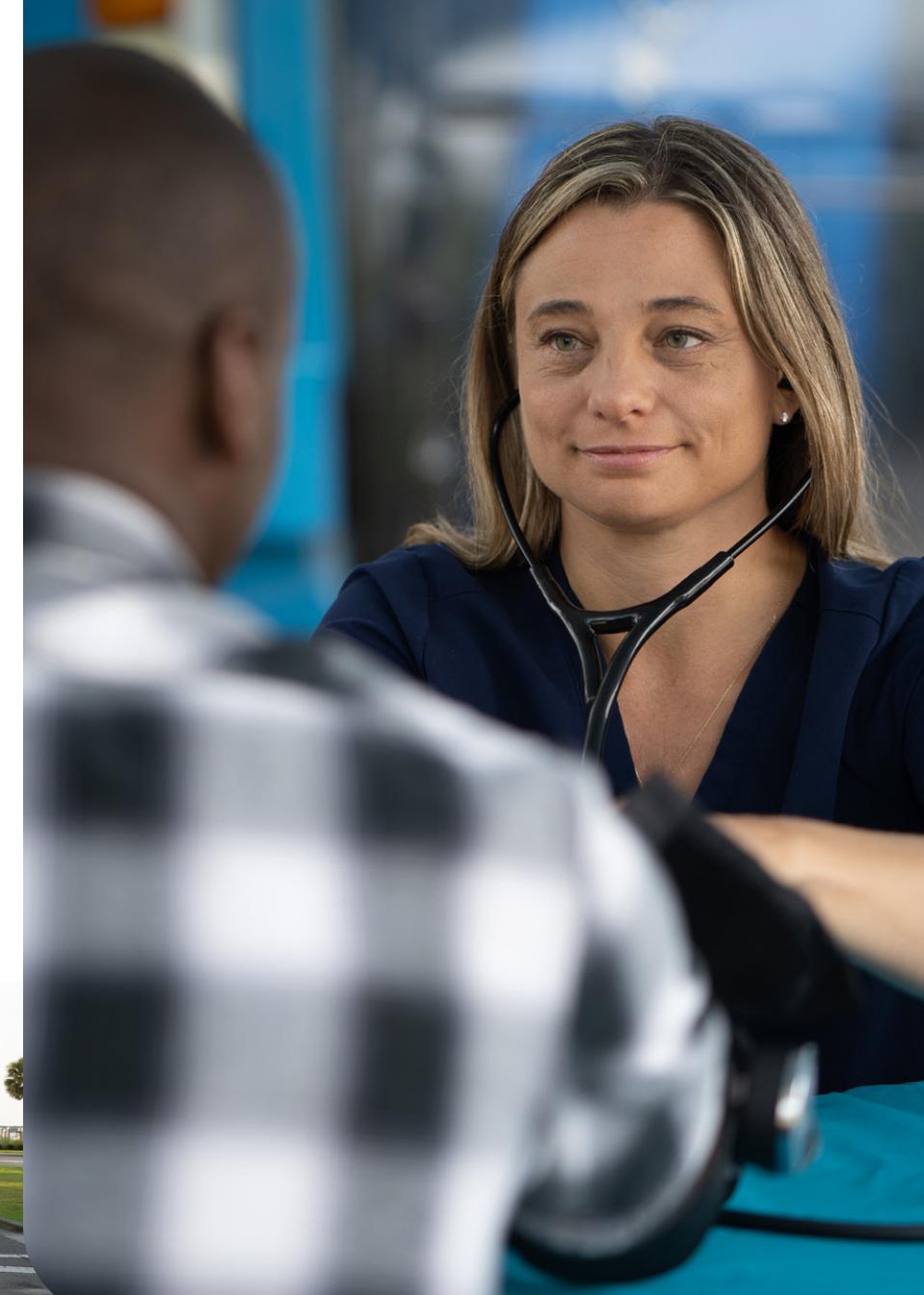
CARE+ CALLS

Being diagnosed with COVID-19 is a scary and dangerous situation for anyone. And for our residents with limited resources, being able to self-isolate or obtain crucial supplies isn't always an option. By implementing Care+ Calls, our team follows up with COVID-19 patients to ensure they have:

- A safe place to quarantine
- Access to food
- An ample supply of hard-to-obtain items
- Help with utilities, rent or other needs

THE ROAD TO BETTER HEALTH

At the peak of the pandemic, Care Connect+ and partners Wildflower Clinic and Epic-Cure hosted COVID-19 vaccination and food distribution events bringing vaccinations via our mobile health clinic to churches, homeless service organizations and migrant worker camps.



Slowing the Spread + Reducing ER Readmissions

While reducing ER readmissions is a key metric for quality of care for hospitals around the world, during a pandemic, it can be a matter of life and death.

Upon release from the hospital, noncritical COVID-19-positive patients often return to the ER when they have nowhere else to go to quarantine or have other issues that prevent proper isolation.

According to one study published by the Oxford University Press, the 30-day readmission rate for

SOMETIMES, IT'S WHAT DOESN'T HAPPEN THAT CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

mild or moderate COVID-19 patients was 7.1% But thanks to our Care+ Calls program, we were able to keep our local ER readmissions rate for COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms at 2.7%.

Ensuring these patients had a place to self-isolate helped us reduce unnecessary ER visits that could potentially infect frontline workers while also taking them away from helping patients in need.

OUR COVID-19 IMPACT

Care Connect+ served as a single point of access, allowing our **97** partners to help serve **THOUSANDS** of clients impacted by COVID-19, meeting over **4,000** needs.

97
PARTNERS

1300
CLIENTS

4000+
NEEDS
78% OF NEEDS FULLY MET

 Rental/mortgage payment assistance: **46%**
 Utility payment assistance: **34%**
 Emergency food: **8%**





Making St. Johns County Healthier + Making History

Our history is short but impactful. What started as a hospital-based Community Health Improvement program serving St. Johns County has grown into a regional social health organization with a client-facing office, more than 17 employees and partnerships with 97 providers.

As we look back on our achievements and growth, we know we didn't get there alone. With our employees, volunteers, partners, donors and Flagler Health+, we celebrate how far we've come by working together.

2016

June
Flagler Health+ (known as Flagler Hospital until rebranding in 2019) launches medication assistance program located in Flagler Hospital main lobby

November
Flagler Health+ establishes partnership with St. Johns County Social Services to provide resources on-site to patients

Full-time county staff is embedded in Flagler Hospital main lobby

2017

May
St. Johns Care Connect+, a community alliance for linking residents with social services, opens office at Flagler Hospital

July
Flagler Hospital becomes Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead agency for the St. Johns County Continuum of Care, a collaborative of homelessness prevention stakeholders throughout the county

December
Flagler Hospital becomes collaborative application and lead agency for the St. Johns County Continuum of Care

2018

January
St. Johns Care Connect+ launches its provider network with 15 local health care providers

August
Flagler Hospital is awarded housing and urban grant to develop housing navigation program

2019

January
St. Johns Care Connect+ provider network grows to 25 providers

February
Flagler Hospital rebrands as Flagler Health+ to embody our commitment to advancing the health of the communities we serve.

June
St. Johns Volunteers! becomes a program of Flagler Health+ Care Connect+

August
Flagler Health+ Care Connect+ Community Health Associates are embedded in two St. Johns County schools

The Crisis Text Line and National Suicide Prevention Hotline phone numbers are added to all St. Johns County School District student badges

2020

January
Flagler Health+ Care Connect+ provider network grows to 42 providers

March
The COVID-19 pandemic begins to impact our communities

Care Connect+ creates a proactive plan to streamline COVID-19 needs

April
Care Connect+ expands to serve Flagler County residents

August
The Youth Crisis Center opens its office inside the Care Connect+ facility

November
Care Connect+ hosts its first BRAVE Summit

December
Care Connect+ collaborated with the Empty Stocking Fund by serving as the main access point and delivered holiday meals to over 120 families in St. Johns County



September
Flagler Health+ Care Connect+ launches BRAVE initiative to promote mental health among youth with \$1 million grant from The PLAYERS Championship

November
Flagler Health+ Care Connect+ expands to Whetstone building

Flagler Health+ Care Connect+ establishes board of directors

December
BRAVE program serves its 300th family
Flagler Health+ receives \$350,000 Florida Blue grant to provide expanded youth behavioral health services through the Crisis Text Line

Care Connect ends the year with a huge impact on the community:

- 1,100 individuals entered Care Connect+; 888 exited the program
- 89 families entered; 51 exited
- 2,567 needs identified
- 1,777 needs met

**EVERY STAT IS MORE THAN A NUMBER.
IT'S A STORY.**

In one year, Care Connect+ helped over 1,000 clients in our communities with a diverse range of needs. Through expanded offerings and continuous improvement, we aim to help even more of our friends and neighbors in the coming years.

When you're self-employed, the costs of individual health insurance can be astronomical — and out of reach for many. This was the case for 63-year-old retired carpenter Mike Arent. When he noticed severe pain in his legs, he thought it was just a pinched nerve and tried to shake it off.

Working with Care Connect+ partner Wildflower Healthcare, a nonprofit provider of free medical and dental services to low-income, uninsured adults in St. Johns County, Mike learned he needed a CT scan on his back. He was able to obtain a CT scan at a local hospital, and not a moment too soon — the scan revealed an aneurysm on a portion of his heart — as well as a fully blocked artery in his leg.

Without insurance and living on Social Security, Mike sought funding for his life-threatening conditions from multiple agencies with no luck. Then, he collaborated with Wildflower and Care Connect+'s Paige Stanton to secure a short-term insurance policy that would cover him for three months. He received an angioplasty and two stents in his leg to promote blood flow, preserving not only his leg, but his life. Since then, additional blockages in his other leg have been identified and treated.

Now, with stents in both of his legs, Mike is able to walk long distances and return to the outdoor activities he relished prior to his debilitating leg pain.



“ Before working with Care Connect+, I could only walk 50 feet before I had to sit down for 10 minutes. Now, I’m planning a trip to the Colorado mountains, where enjoying retirement is all I have to worry about. The team at Care Connect+ gave me my life back, and I’m forever grateful!”

– **Mike Arent**
Retired Carpenter, St. Augustine

Youth Mental Health: Here for Children. Here for Families.

It's not always easy to spot the signs of depression, anxiety, stress and sadness in our youth. That's why Care Connect+ and several local school districts, with support from THE PLAYERS championship, have teamed up to create BRAVE (Be Resilient and Voice Emotions), a program that encourages youth to:

- TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES EARLY ON
- ADDRESS SOCIAL BARRIERS
- BE OPEN TO RECEIVING HELP
- ACCESS BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES AT THE RIGHT TIME, AT THE RIGHT PLACE

Through BRAVE, Care Connect+ serves as the hub for student behavioral health referrals for all 39 schools in the St. Johns County School District and 15 schools in Putnam county. The program has also recently expanded to serve Nassau and Clay counties.

Utilizing a unified intake process, Care Connect+ staff identifies unmet social needs for the entire family, eligible resources and the most appropriate behavioral health provider for the child. This includes services provided by local and national behavioral health providers. BRAVE has the resources families need, including behavioral health navigation services, access to virtual mental health counseling visits and a 24-hour crisis text line. The program also includes on-site telehealth booths that offer access to urgent care and mental health services.

BRAVE

Be Resilient and Voice Emotions

A PROGRAM OF  SUPPORTED BY 



2019-2021 BRAVE Data

95% Increased the rate of students and families following through with mental health services from **35% to 95%**

Connected with families and assigned a Community Health Associate within a **3-day average**

72 HR



Connected and navigated **1071 families**



Referred **991** youth to behavioral health providers for services



Identified **492 additional needs** with **90%** of those needs being fully met



Tracked **3041 total appointments** attended

BRAVE AT WORK

As a school social worker for nearly 30 years, there isn't much Yvonne Ross hasn't seen. In her 15 1/2 years with St. Johns County, there's been a huge spike in anxiety, depression and other mental challenges, even for students in elementary school.

While the source of all this added stress is hard to pinpoint, home issues, social media and bullying are key culprits. And many parents whose children are having mental issues find themselves in need of support too, from assistance with food and transportation to help fighting addiction's vicious cycle. Others may feel there is a stigma attached to seeking assistance, which exacerbates the problem.

When a student comes into a social worker's office with signs of distress, the child is referred to Care Connect+. The organization takes over the case management, acting as a strong advocate for the child and parents, and the social worker remains in close contact with the Care Connect+ team. Everything is tracked seamlessly through the Service Point database so all parties are updated.

Even if a referral is focused on the mental health of a child, the Care Connect+ caseworker will inquire if there are any other issues within the home where we can help navigate resources. And in many cases, the parents of those we help through BRAVE return to seek their own mental health support, which we are able to quickly help them navigate.

// Working with Care Connect+ allows me to feel confident no student or family will fall through the cracks. The team works within 24 to 48 hours to assess the mental health and other needs of my students. When I create a referral, I know the Care Connect+ team will be a bulldog in getting the best resources for that child and family."

– **Yvonne Ross**
Elementary School Social Worker,
St. Johns County School District

// Sometimes it's hard to ask for help because there's a stigma there. And swallowing pride can be difficult. But anytime I've ever needed anything, I was able to ask. ... It's like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders."

– **Amber Squires**
St. Augustine Resident
& Care Connect+ Client

BRAVE DELIVERS AN UNEXPECTED HOLIDAY BLESSING

When you're a single mother of three, putting food on the table on any given day can be challenging — even with multiple jobs. For Amber Squires, giving her kids the holiday they deserved wasn't an attainable daydream. When St. Johns County school counselors identified two of her children as needing assistance and enrolled them in BRAVE, Care Connect+ stepped in.

Jennifer Wills sprang into action, asking the right questions to uncover what the family really needed. She worked with our agency partners to find the resources to help with groceries for the whole family, including a special formula for her youngest child. We were also able to help Amber give her kids a Thanksgiving meal and Christmas gifts that added up to a wonderful holiday season for her family.



ST. JOHNS COUNTY IS ONE OF THE MOST AFFLUENT IN THE STATE, YET MORE THAN 800 SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN ARE HOMELESS.

Homeless Prevention Is a Community Effort

Making a difference in the lives of our displaced children and families to help break the cycle of homelessness is a large undertaking. Through a collaborative effort, Care Connect+ is leading the charge through the Continuum of Care partnership.

Using our coordinated approach and innovative Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) software, we work with a range of community partners committed to ending homelessness through a multipronged approach.

We work with partners to:

- Provide outreach and access to essential services, such as food and health and human services
- Offer shelter for domestic violence victims and their families
- Assist families who experience chronic homelessness with transitional housing and a path to self-sufficiency

COORDINATED ENTRY, AMPLIFIED IMPACT

Because Care Connect+ is the single access point for families in need, they don't have to tell their story over and over or sit on a waiting list. Our caseworkers work in close partnership with all our homelessness prevention stakeholders and our clients to provide assistance with everything from physical medical treatment and logistics to obtaining proper ID to receive Medicaid, as well as preventing eviction for families on the verge of being kicked out of their home.

We're proud of what we achieved in 2020 through close alliance with our partner agencies, including:



**39%
DECREASE**

in unsheltered population



**17%
DECREASE**

of veteran homelessness



**59%
DECREASE**

of youth homelessness



BREAKING THE CYCLE FOR FAMILIES AND GENERATIONS

The streets are no place for an adult to live, much less a newborn. For one family of 13, alternating between cars and hotels was the way of life for several months. Through a concerted effort between Care Connect+, St. Francis House, and the Emergency Services and Homelessness Coalition of St. Johns County, the family was able to find stability through transitional housing. But 13 people cannot live in a single-family home.

Eight of the most vulnerable, including children and a girl with a baby on the way, were able to move into a four-bedroom home first. The remaining family members, including another 3-year-old and mom-to-be, still needed stable housing. Together, we were able to house the remaining family members in a transitional home across the street from their family. Both babies were born with stable places to come home to, and their mothers received child care vouchers so they could get back to work.

Instead of living on the street, these children, parents and grandparents now live across the street from one another. Without the ongoing stress of day-to-day survival, they can focus on finding good jobs and learning the life skills to help them become self-sufficient and break the cycle of homelessness.

It's just one example of the great need — and greater commitment — you'll find right here in our community.

“Care Connect+ has truly been a godsend for helping us further our mission of empowering homeless families to become self-sufficient. Leveraging a single point of entry process, the Care Connect+ team is able to quickly assess clients and help them in many different areas, then send me referrals for housing needs I can help with. This streamlined process eliminates a lot of additional administrative tasks that could delay placing residents who need assistance fast.”

— **Debi Redding**

Executive Director

Emergency Services and Homeless
Coalition of St. Johns County





Giving Back Helps Us All

Our volunteers are the “boots on the ground” that we need to truly make an impact. Care Connect+ clients receive support from members of the Flagler Health+ Alliance and the Care Connect+ Volunteers organization. These generous volunteers help residents secure the assistance they need to cover the basics for good health, including help with navigating paperwork to obtain:

- **MEDICARE COVERAGE**
- **DISCOUNTED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**
- **FOOD STAMPS**

For Care Connect+ and Care Connect+ Volunteers member Karen Gazda, it’s a labor of love. As a semiretired medical professional, she has been helping the community through Flagler Health+ for over 10 years. Since joining Care Connect+, Karen spends her days helping ensure that residents who need help with prescriptions do not lapse in taking their meds.

As you can imagine, helping one client obtain affordable prescriptions or assisting them in gaining access to Medicare services requires multiple calls and follow-ups with clients as well as government agencies and drug manufacturers. In some cases, the clients Karen is trying to assist don’t have phones, making it a challenge to ensure they do not experience any disruption in taking their meds.

“I’ve lived in St. Johns County since 2005 and have volunteered with Flagler Health+ for over a decade. In only a matter of months, my experience volunteering with Care Connect+ has forever changed my life. It’s so rewarding to see my community through the eyes of our clients and make an impact on my neighbors in need.”

– **Karen Gazda**
Care Connect+ Volunteers



Total Collaboration + Empower Our Community

“ The COVID-19 pandemic has shed a light on the important role that Care Connect+ continues to play in building healthier communities across Northeast Florida. With an emphasis on collaboration, innovation and seamless care navigation, the team at Care Connect+ is closing the gap in health care disparities and helping area residents and communities thrive. This would not be possible without our growing base of community partners.”

– **John Eaton**
Executive Director

OUR PARTNERS

We seamlessly work with our partners every day to ensure our clients get the right resources to improve their lives as quickly as possible. Partners include:

- Ability Tree
- Abundant Life Ministries
- Adapt Behavioral
- All Therapies Support
- Alpha-Omega Miracle Home
- Anastasia Baptist
- Azalea Health
- BASS ABA Therapy
- Better Help
- Betty Griffin Center
- Care Patrol of Jacksonville
- Catholic Charities St. Augustine
- CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services Inc
- Changing Homelessness
- Child Guidance Center
- Children's Home Society of Florida
- Chrysalis Health
- CIL Jacksonville
- Clay Behavioral Health Center
- Clay County School District
- Community Hospice & Palliative Care
- Community Partnership for Children
- Council on Aging- St. Johns County
- Covering Florida
- Crisis Text Line
- Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center
- Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
- Dreams Come True
- Early Learning Coalition Flagler and Volusia Counties
- Early Learning Coalition North Florida
- Elder Source
- Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition of St. Johns County
- EPIC Behavioral Healthcare
- Epic-Cure
- Episcopal Children's Services
- First Responder Project
- Flagler Cares
- Flagler Health+
- Flagler Healthcare Foundation
- Florida Blue Foundation
- Florida Power & Light
- Florida Psychological Associates
- Habitat for Humanity St. Johns County
- Healthfully
- Health Fund Solutions
- Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida
- Healthy Start
- Home Again St. Johns
- Honoring Choices Florida
- Hopefull Handbags
- Impower
- Jimmy Jams Community Outreach
- Lions Club
- Lutheran Services Florida
- Nassau County School District
- New Beginnings Christian Assembly
- New Growth Counseling
- Northeast Florida Community Action Agency
- Operation New Hope
- Positive Presence
- Putnam County School District
- Putnam County Medical Mission
- Rick Jones
- Right Path Behavioral Health Services
- River's Edge Counseling Center
- River Point Behavioral Health
- SEDNET
- SMA Healthcare
- Step by Step Behavioral Health Services
- St. Vincent de Paul Society St. Augustine
- St. Vincent De Paul Santa Maria Del Mar Flagler County
- St. Johns County School District
- St. Johns River College
- St. Augustine Police Department
- St. Augustine Beach Police Department
- St. Augustine Sertoma Club
- St. Augustine Society
- St. Augustine Youth Services
- St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners Health and Human Services
- St. Johns County Continuum of Care
- St. Johns County Fire Rescue
- St. Johns County Housing Partnership
- St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
- St. Johns County Veterans Council
- St. Johns Legal Aid
- The Bailey Group
- The Steven Cohen Military Clinic
- The PLAYERS
- The Salvation Army St. Augustine
- The Vinson Foundation
- United Way St. Johns County
- University of St. Augustine
- University of Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
- Veterans Affairs VA
- Volusia/Flagler County Coalition for Homeless
- Wildflower Healthcare
- Youth Crisis Center

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Through the guidance of our board of directors, we will continue to strategically expand how and where we help our neighbors in need:



Jason Barrett



Katherine Batenhorst



Ivan Cosimi



Andrew DiFeo



Patti Greenough



Adrienne Gillis



Robert Hardwick



Shawna Novak



Nangela Pulsfus

OUR TEAM

We're passionate about getting the best possible outcomes for our clients. Each member of our team wears many hats to do whatever it takes.

“The most rewarding part of working with the Continuum of Care is seeing everything work together toward the same vision, with the same goal of ending homelessness.”

– **Brittany Coronado**
Service Point Coordinator

“I love being part of Care Connect+ because I'm able to identify all resources we have available to those in need in the county and, above all, having the ability to really connect with people. Not only am I able to help those in need, but I'm able to work alongside brilliant minds as well.”

– **Eric Powell**
Social Worker/Counselor

“Through working at Care Connect+, I'm able to build on the strengths many of our clients may not realize they already have and provide them with access to what they need to become successful.”

– **Jennifer Wills**
Community Health Associate

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Through our volunteer partnerships, we have the support to achieve great things for our clients. Volunteer partners include:

Flagler Health+ Auxiliary | an outstanding network of volunteers managed through Flagler Hospital in St. Augustine. Flagler Health+ Auxiliary connects volunteers with a range of roles suited for their skills and personalities.

Care Connect+ Volunteers | an organization dedicated to connecting those interested in donating their time with open positions throughout the county.

We can't thank our volunteers enough for helping us improve the overall health of our community.

Stronger + Healthier Together

Elevating the health and well-being of all residents in our county is a group effort.
We're proud of the strides we've made in fostering a healthier community.
But our work is nowhere near finished.

We will continue to provide compassionate assistance in navigating the right resources at the right time, improving lives in St. Johns County and beyond.



“ Together, we are ending homelessness, feeding the hungry, managing chronic diseases, providing medications and transportation, and helping our youth navigate through the challenges of adolescence. And for that, I say thank you.”

– **Jason Barrett**
President and CEO, Flagler Health+

Let's work together to improve
the health of our communities.

CONNECT

VOLUNTEER

CareConnectPlus.com | 904-819-3070

CareConnectVolunteers.org | FlaglerHealth.org



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Impact
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