(http://wfsu.org)

Leon's Free Developmental Screenings For Kids Offer Services, Mark Tenth Anniversary

By MARGIE MENZEL • APR 10, 2019

f Share (http://facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy2a3camm&t=Leon%27s%20Free%20Developmental%20Screenings%20For%20Kids%20Offer%20Services%2C%20Mark%20Tenth%20Anniversary%20)

🐦 Tweet (http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy2a3camm&text=Leon%27s%20Free%20Developmental%20Screenings%20For%20Kids%20Offer%20Services%2C%20Mark%20Tenth%20Anniversary%20)

✉ Email (mailto:?subject=Leon%27s%20Free%20Developmental%20Screenings%20For%20Kids%20Offer%20Services%2C%20Mark%20Tenth%20Anniversary%20&body=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy2a3camm)

Free developmental screenings are being offered to children in Tallahassee this Friday, April 12th. The screenings are by appointment at Children's Medical Services, 2390 Phillips Road.

CREDIT WHOLECHILDLEON.ORG

This week is a milestone for the youngest residents of Leon County – the tenth year that children's agencies and health care professionals have offered free developmental screenings (https://wholechildleon.org/event/free-developmental-screening).

The early interventions have helped hundreds of kids. More than 30 agencies and 100 volunteers have staged the screenings twice a year since 2009, coordinated by Whole Child Leon.

As they do every spring, they'll come together this Friday to screen for problems with vision, hearing, dental, behavioral issues, and more.

Whole Child Leon Executive Director Courtney Atkins says about 65 percent of the children screened have at least one developmental delay.

"When children enter kindergarten and they haven't had an intervention that they might need, it doesn't feel good to them, and it sets a tone that can last a lifetime," she says.

Holly McPhail serves on Whole Child Leon's board as a parent representative. She didn't get involved by bringing her son to a screening, but wishes she had. It took almost nine months acting on her own to get a diagnosis and treatment for him.

"I wish that I'd had the opportunity to take Joshua to one of the Whole Child Leon screening days, because that day I would have been connected with a provider and would have saved nine months of heartache and strife and not knowing what to do as a mother to help my son communicate better," she says.

Angel Trejo, now retired from the Department of Children and Families, helped start the screenings. He says they've expanded to include Florida State University's College of Medicine and focus more on maternal health.

"It's important to know the caretaker – and usually the primary caretaker is mom – is mentally fit and healthy so they can provide good health care and good care to their child," Trejo says.

Just one other Florida county, Hillsborough, does these screenings. Longtime volunteer Vickie Peace recalls how the Leon contingent learned the ropes.

"We got excited, then some members of our group went down and spent time with them during a screening, and they said, 'Yep, we can pull this off.' So we've done it. Ten years now," Peace says.

Now they've served nearly 1,000 children aged six months to 5 years.

The next screening is this Friday, April 12th at 8:30 a.m. at Children's Medical Services (http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/). To make an appointment, call (850) 561-6548 or click here (http://bit.ly/Spring19CommunityScreening).