

# Playing Through Peril:

*stories from the field of Hurricane Ian*

**Taylor Hinton, BS, CCLS**

**Sarah (Buwalda) Musielak, BS, CCLS II**



# Who We Are

## Taylor Hinton, BS, CCLS

- CCLS for 6 Years
- Worked at Golisano Children's Hospital of SWFL for 2 years in Hem/Onc
- Primary facility dog handler for Lemon for ~7 months
- Currently working at Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines, IA as a float.

## Sarah Musielak, BS, CCLS II

- CCLS for 5 Years
- Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital
- Cardiac
- CLDR Disaster Relief Responder



# Stages of Disaster



Zunin/Meyers, as cited in Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000).

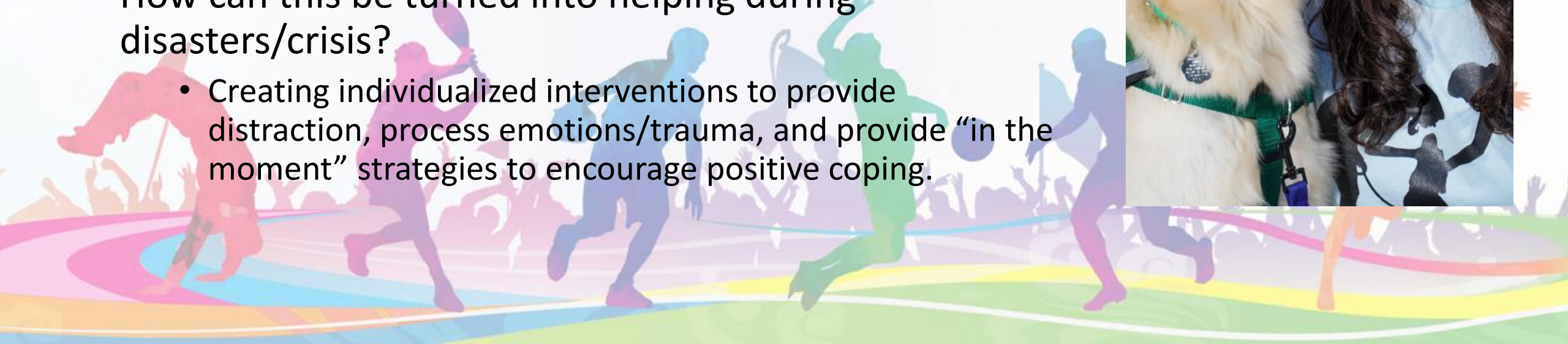
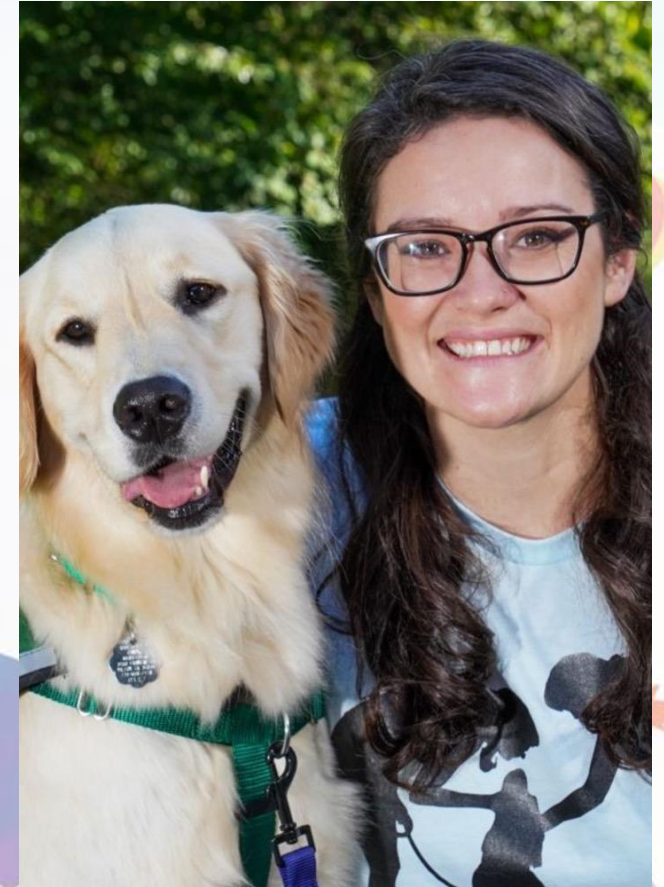
# Animal Assisted Therapy

## Animal- Assisted Therapy (AAT)

- Goal-oriented, planned, structured, and documented therapeutic intervention directed by health and human service providers as part of their profession. AAT can be incorporated by a wide variety of disciplines (Child Life, PT, OT, Speech, education professionals, mental health professionals, recreation therapists, etc.)

How can this be turned into helping during disasters/crisis?

- Creating individualized interventions to provide distraction, process emotions/trauma, and provide “in the moment” strategies to encourage positive coping.



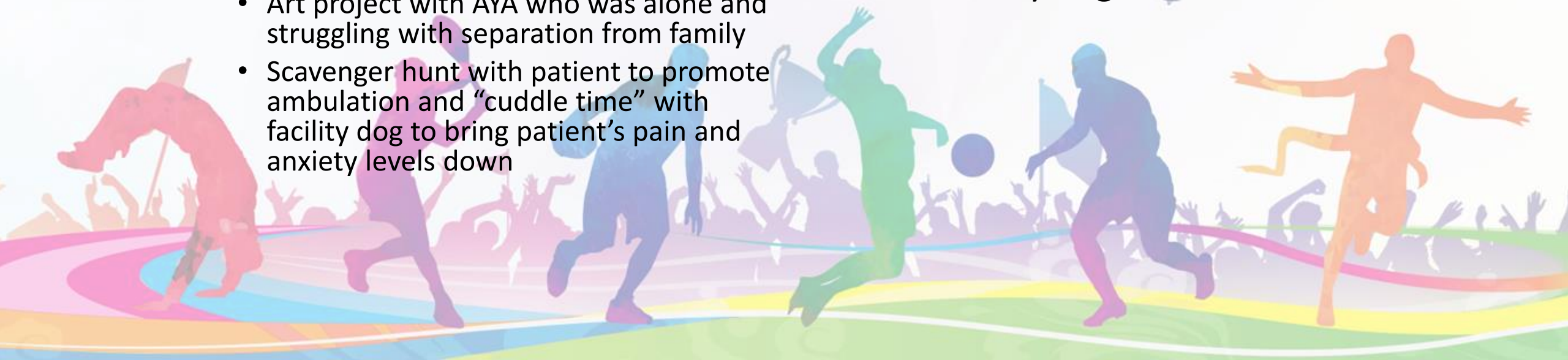
# Patient Focused AAT Interventions

## During Hurricane Ian

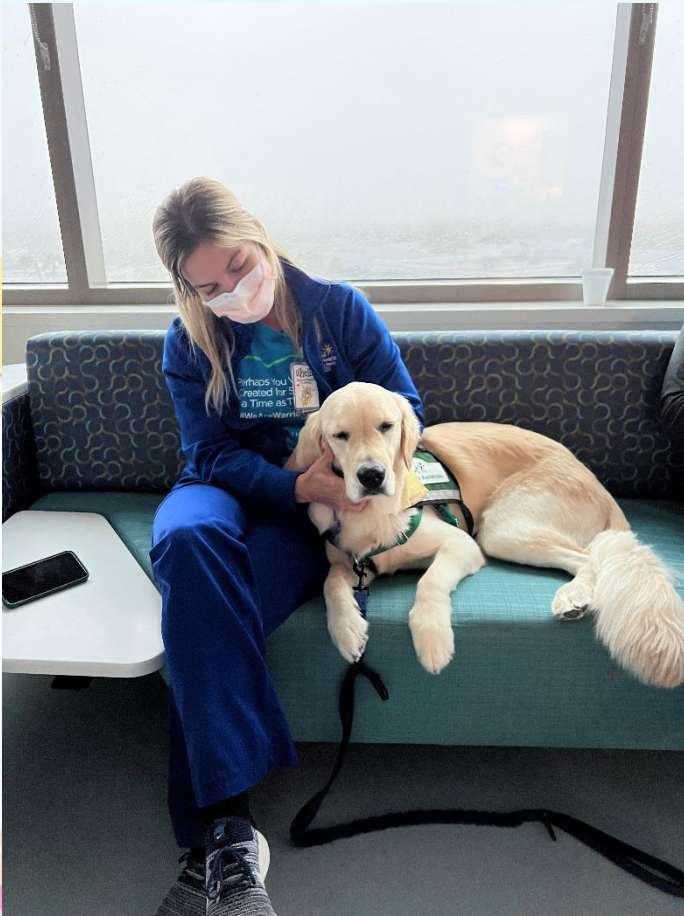
- Working in Hem/Onc unit with 5 admitted patients
- Assessing what patient/family needed in the moment
- Interventions included:
  - Playing Uno with patient and mom to provide “normal” environment
  - Art project with AYA who was alone and struggling with separation from family
  - Scavenger hunt with patient to promote ambulation and “cuddle time” with facility dog to bring patient’s pain and anxiety levels down

## After Hurricane

- Emotional support to patients and families
- Helping with transition to outside hospital
- Walking with patients, families, and facility dog to ambulance

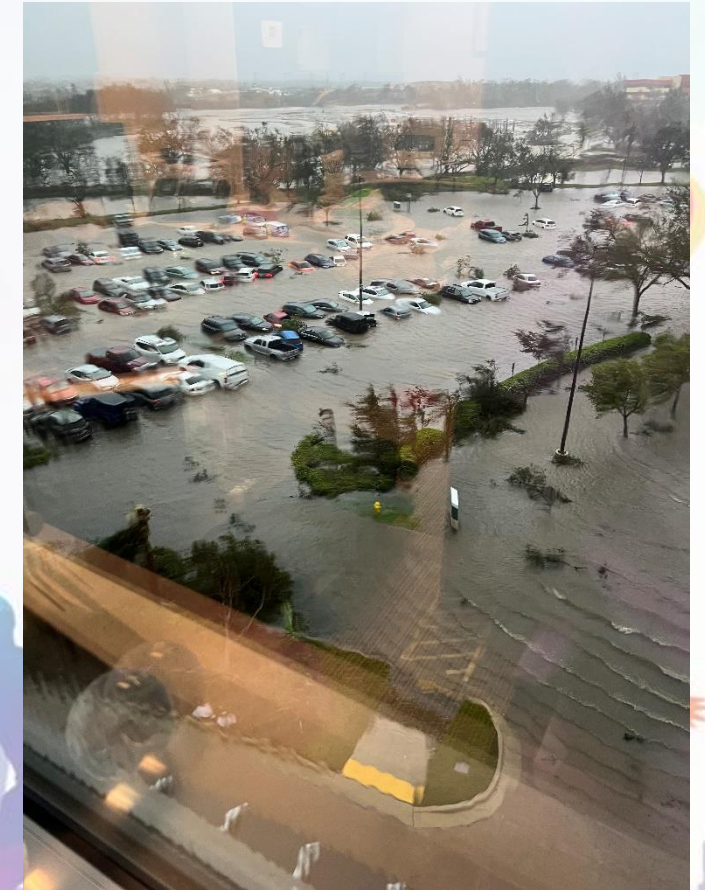
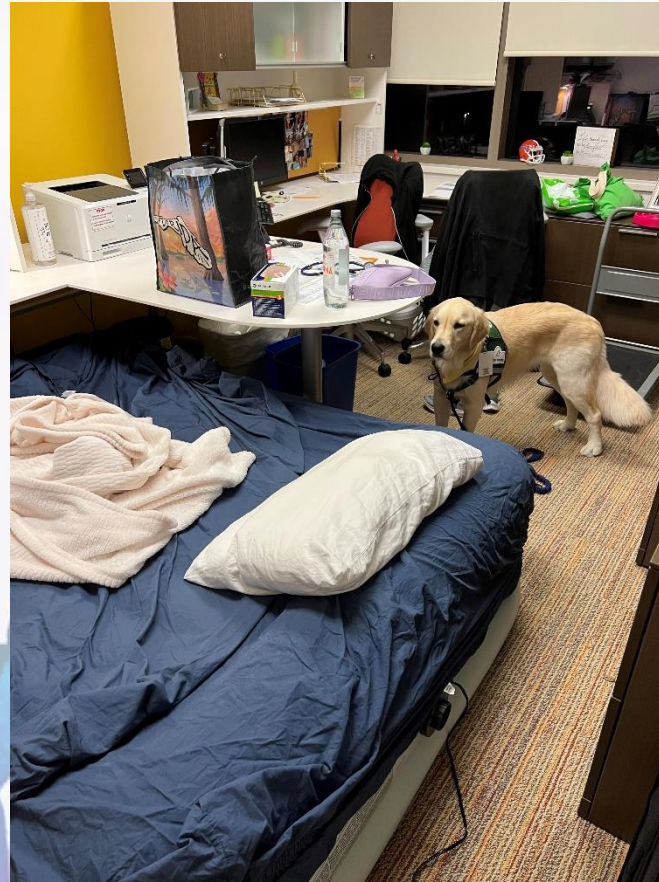


# AAT for Staff Support



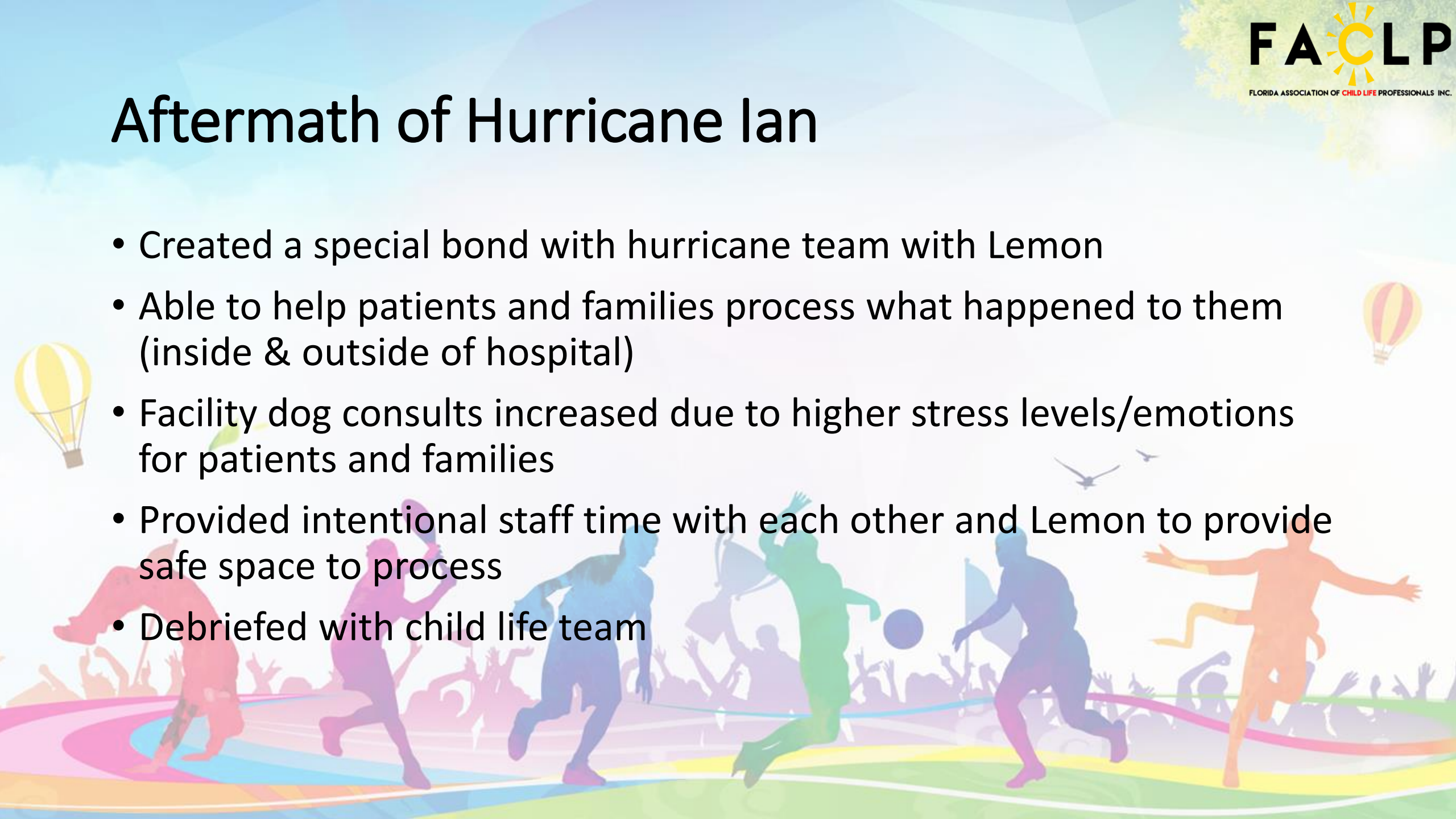
# Separating Professional & Personal Life

- Lived in the hospital for 4 days
- Ate meals in staff lounge
- With co-workers 24/7
- Finding time to take personal breaks
- Playing games & providing emotional support to co-workers while wondering “What will I go home to?”



# Aftermath of Hurricane Ian

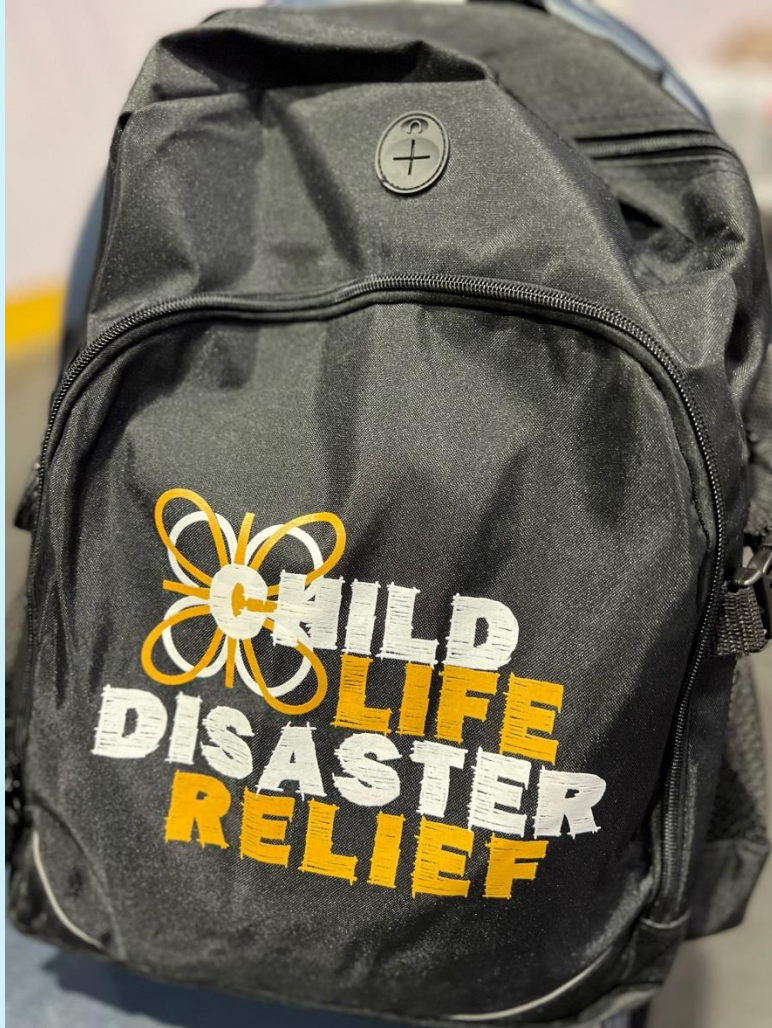
- Created a special bond with hurricane team with Lemon
- Able to help patients and families process what happened to them (inside & outside of hospital)
- Facility dog consults increased due to higher stress levels/emotions for patients and families
- Provided intentional staff time with each other and Lemon to provide safe space to process
- Debriefed with child life team







# What's in your child life "backpack"?



# 5 Essential Needs of Children During Disasters

1. Safety
2. Regulation
3. Self & Collective Efficacy
4. Connection
5. Hope



# Essential Need #1: Safety



## HURRICANES

Families play a critical role in helping to reestablish a sense of normalcy and safety for a child before, during and after a disaster occurs. Please take a moment to read through these suggestions on how to support your child.

► [Look for links to more activities and facts on our website](#)



scan me  
for Disaster Resources

### DEVELOPMENTAL EXPLANATION



#### How to Explain Hurricanes to Children

Be honest with children and keep explanations simple. Encourage children to ask questions and lead the discussion.

A hurricane is a really strong storm. For a hurricane to form there needs to be just the right ingredients. The "recipe" for a hurricane is wind and warm water. When the wind is at a steady flow and ocean water is just the right temperature the wind creates a circular motion that if it gets to 74 mph becomes a hurricane.

► [Additional Information About Hurricanes.](#)

### PREPARATION



#### Helping Children Prepare for Hurricanes

Encourage children to participate in planning as a family. Ask your child to think about what helps them feel safe, calm, and comfortable. Create with children a checklist of tasks to complete before the hurricane. This might include bringing toys from the outside in, gathering canned food, water, flashlights, and non electronic games to keep busy in case the power goes out.

► [Tasks Checklist](#) | ► [Go Bag Suggestions.](#)

### COPING



#### All Feelings Are Okay

Using the following ► [Tools for Caregivers](#) will help children to feel safe, calm and relaxed. After a storm children may want to feel useful and part of the clean up. Give children tasks that are safe and that they can handle.

► [Safe Ways to Clean Up After a Storm.](#)

### PLAY



#### Play It Out

Play is how children understand their world and learn to process difficult experiences. Children may re-enact a hurricane by moving like the wind. Create a safe space for children to pretend to be or blow like the wind. They may run around without direction, fall down spontaneously, and knock into structures they built only to rebuild and do it over again.

### EXPRESSIVE ART



#### Express Yourself

Children need opportunities to express themselves. Encourage your child to express emotions through movement, play, art or talking with a trusted adult. Encourage children to make their own pinwheel. To make your own pinwheel try: ► ["Blow your Worries Away" Activity](#)



## FLOODS

Families play a critical role in helping to reestablish a sense of normalcy and safety for a child before, during and after a disaster occurs. Please take a moment to read through these suggestions on how to support your child.

► [Look for links to more activities and facts on our website](#)



scan me  
for Disaster Resources

### DEVELOPMENTAL EXPLANATION



#### How to Explain Floods to Children

Be honest with children and keep explanations simple. Encourage children to ask questions and lead the discussion.

Usually when it rains, the ground is able to absorb all the water. When there is too much water for the ground to absorb this causes flooding. Floods usually occur after other disasters like hurricanes, tsunamis, heavy rains, melting snow, and overflowing drainage systems or levees.

► [Additional Facts About Flooding](#)

### PREPARATION



#### Helping Children Prepare for Flooding

Encourage children to participate in planning as a family. Preparing for and talking about flooding helps children cope with fears and anxiety. Work with children to identify items they may want to put on a higher shelf or a higher part of the house in case water enters the home. Empowering children with tools to feel prepared will lessen their fears and anxiety and develop skills that may keep everyone safe during severe weather. If you need to evacuate consider a "Go Bag".

► [Go Bag Suggestions](#)

### COPING



#### All Feelings Are Okay

Using the following ► [Tools for Caregivers](#) will help children to feel safe, calm and relaxed. Telling or making up stories, playing a game, or creating art as a family builds connections and helps children feel heard, cared for and listened to.

### PLAY



#### Play It Out

Play is how children understand their world and learn to process difficult experiences. Creating a safe space to act out, express, and recreate moments is how children learn to understand their experiences. After a flood, children may want to play in water. Fill bowls, sinks, pots, pools or the bathtub with water, add figurines, blocks, cars, and boats for play.

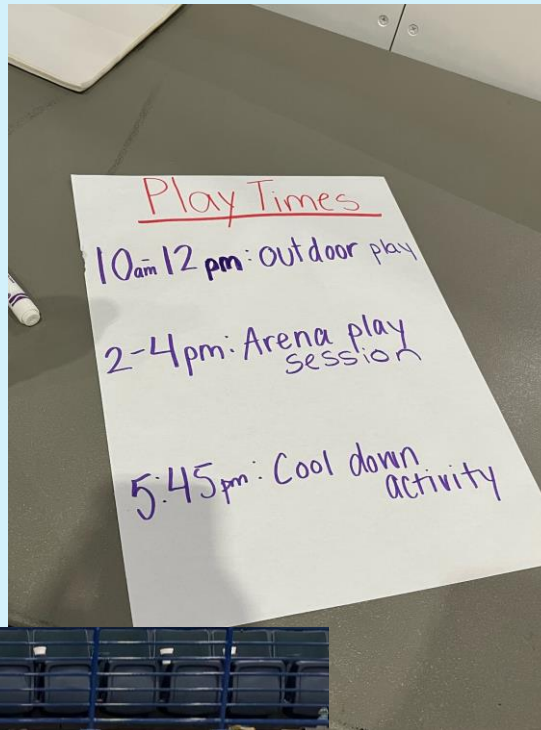
### EXPRESSIVE ART



#### Express Yourself

Children need opportunities to express themselves. Encourage your child to express emotions through movement, play, art or talking with a trusted adult. Watercolor painting encourages children to use water in a safe, creative way. Suggest painting their feelings or describe their experiences. Painting alongside children demonstrates it is something you are working through too.

# Essential Need #2: Regulation



# Practicing from a Trauma Informed Lens



## Nervous System Symptoms of Regulation and Dys-regulation

*All symptoms of dys-regulation arise out of perceptions of the events in our lives. When we integrate our perceptions, we change the symptoms in our nervous system. It is wise to master the art of how to integrate our perceptions and how to regulate the symptoms that arise in our bodies to help return us to a more regulated/ventral state.*

Sympathetic Response - Freeze, Flight, Fight Hyper-arousal Symptoms

*Perceptions of Threat/Challenge*

- Hyper-alert
- Hyper-vigilant
- Increased heart rate
- Defensive
- “Pounding” sensation in the head
- Anxious
- Excessive motoric activity
- Overwhelmed, disorganized
- Highly irritable
- Uncontrollable bouts of rage
- Aggressive
- Dissociation

Parasympathetic/Ventral Vagal Response- Regulated Symptoms (Mindful/“Attached to Self”)

*Neuroception of Safety*

- Think logically/clearly
- Able to make conscious choices
- Able to make eye contact
- Display a wide range of emotional expression
- Feel “grounded”
- Able to notice breath
- Poised
- Internal awareness of both mind and body
- “In the body”
- Able to communicate verbally in a clear manner

Parasympathetic/Dorsal Vagal Response- Collapse, Immobilization, Hypo-arousal Symptoms

*Perceptions of Threat/Challenge*

- Helplessness
- Appear life-less
- Non-expressive
- Numbing
- Lack of motivation
- Lethargic/Tired
- Dulled capacity to feel significant events
- Emotional constriction
- Depression
- Isolation
- Dissociation

# Practicing from a Trauma Informed Lens

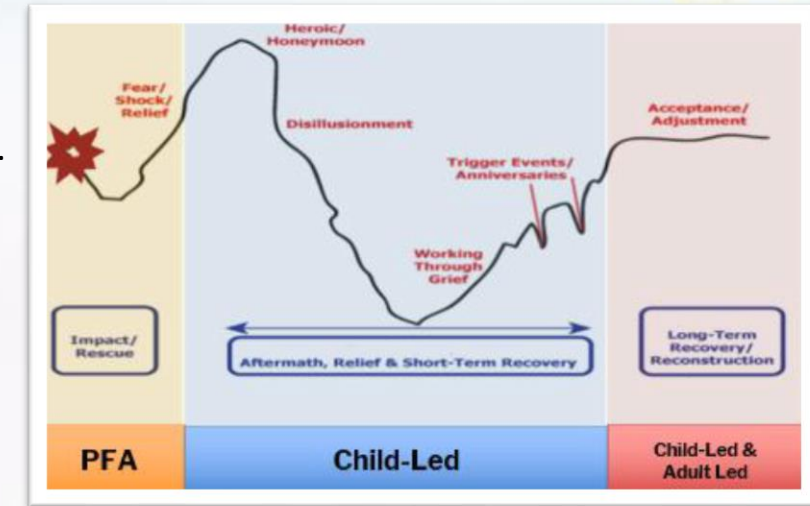
## Synergetic Play Therapy® - Regulation Activities

*Listed below are just some examples of activities that can be used to help regulate a dys-regulated nervous system. It is wise to do these activities pro-actively, as well as in moments of dys-regulation. It is also important to follow the body's innate wisdom back to a regulated/ventral state. These activities are important to be done alone AND also with someone.*

- Run, jump, spin, dance with pauses to take deep breaths- you can make a game and have child jump high to touch something high on a wall or in a door frame
- Run, jump, etc and crash into something soft (i.e jump on a bed and crash repeatedly)
- Bounce on a yoga ball
- Roll across the floor back and forth
- Sit in a chair and push up with your arms (as if trying to get out of the chair) ...keep some resistance
- Massages
- Deep pressure on arms and legs (you can slowly apply pressure down arms and legs in a long stroking motion)
- Eat (particularly something crunchy)
- Drink through a straw
- Take a bath or shower
- Wrap up in a blanket and snuggle (a little tightly for some pressure)- of course, do this safely.
- March or sing during transitions
- Play Mozart music in the background during challenging times of the day if in hyper-arousal
- Play Hard Rock/Fast/Bass music if in hypo-arousal
- Carry heavy things or push heavy things around
- Do isometrics (wall pushups or push hands together (looks like you are praying))
- Walk quickly
- Run up and down steps
- Shake head quickly
- Hang upside down off of a bed or couch
- Play sports
- "Doodle" on paper (this one can be a bit more distracting, but sometimes works)
- Hold or fidget a Koosh ball, rubber band, straw, clay
- Rub gently or vigorously on your skin or clothing
- Put a cold or hot wash cloth on face
- Dim the lights if in hyper-arousal
- Turn on the lights if in hypo-arousal
- Read a book
- Swing
- Learn about "Brain Gym"- tons of ideas
- Yoga
- Snuggle
- Dance
- Move, move, move- anyway that it feels good to your body
- Describe what is happening in your body out loud- "My tummy is going in circles", "My legs feel heavy", etc...
- Breathe, breathe, breathe- make sure that your inhalation is the same length as your exhalation

# Child Directed Play

- **Psychological First Aid (PFA):** Interventions in the midst of the trauma.
  - Providing education to promote understanding that will facilitate adjustment.
  - Offering appropriate (but not false) reassurances to correct misconceptions and reduce risk.
  - Supplying information about common reactions and practical coping strategies.
- **Child-led/ Child Directed/ Non-Directive Interventions:** The child leads the conversation and/or play.
- **Adult-led/ Directive Interventions:** The adult chooses a conversation topic and or play activity for the child/teen and guides them through the process.



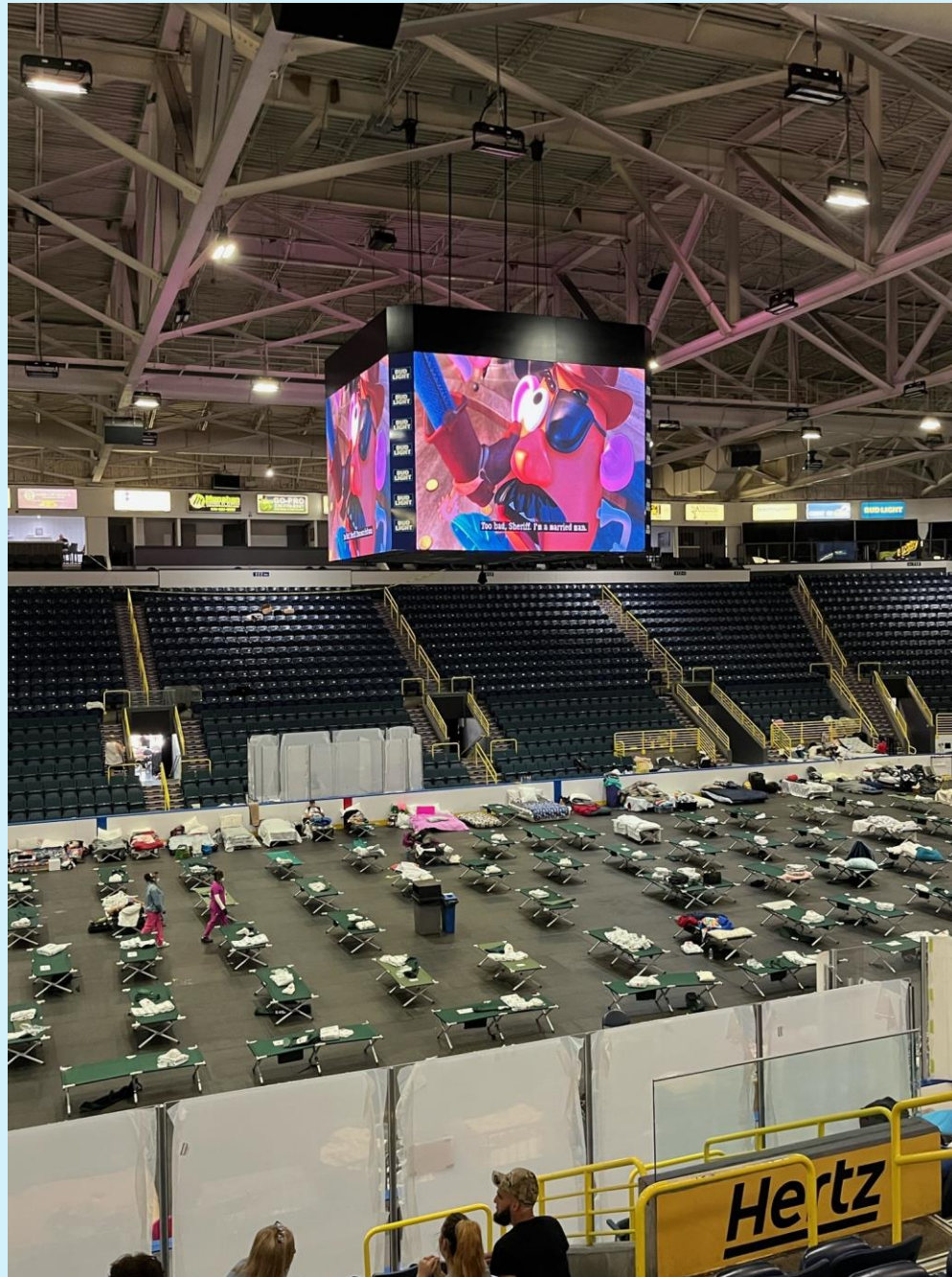
*\*Support groups are an example of a mixture of adult-led and child-led interventions.*

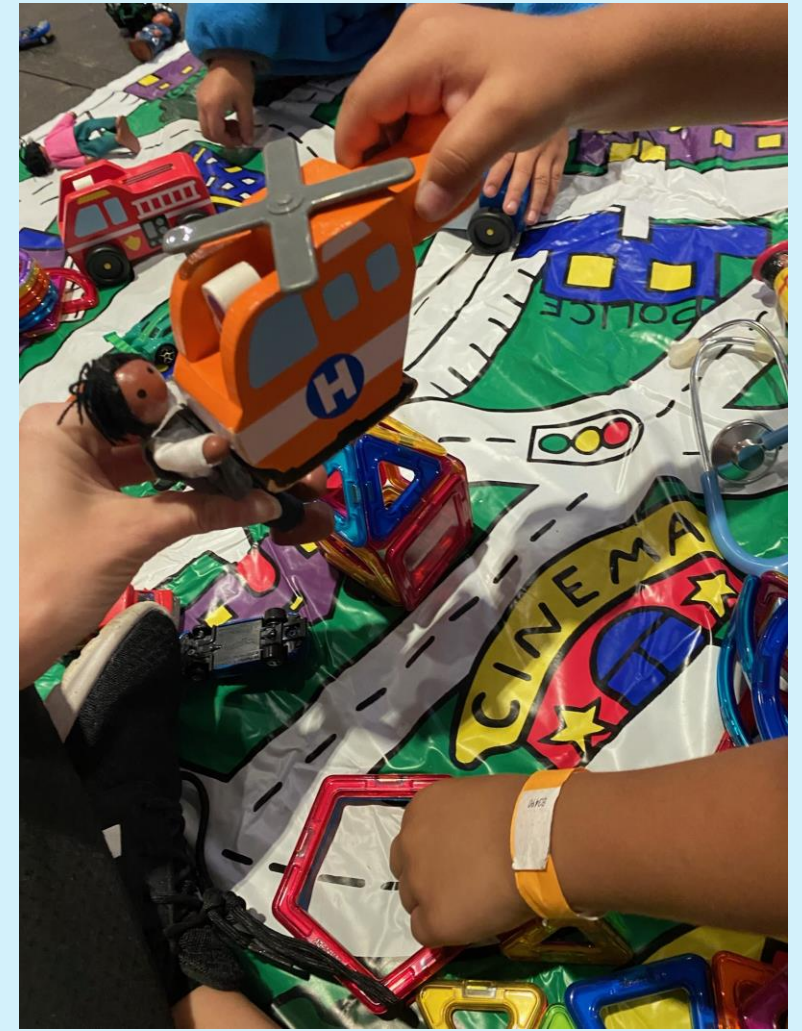






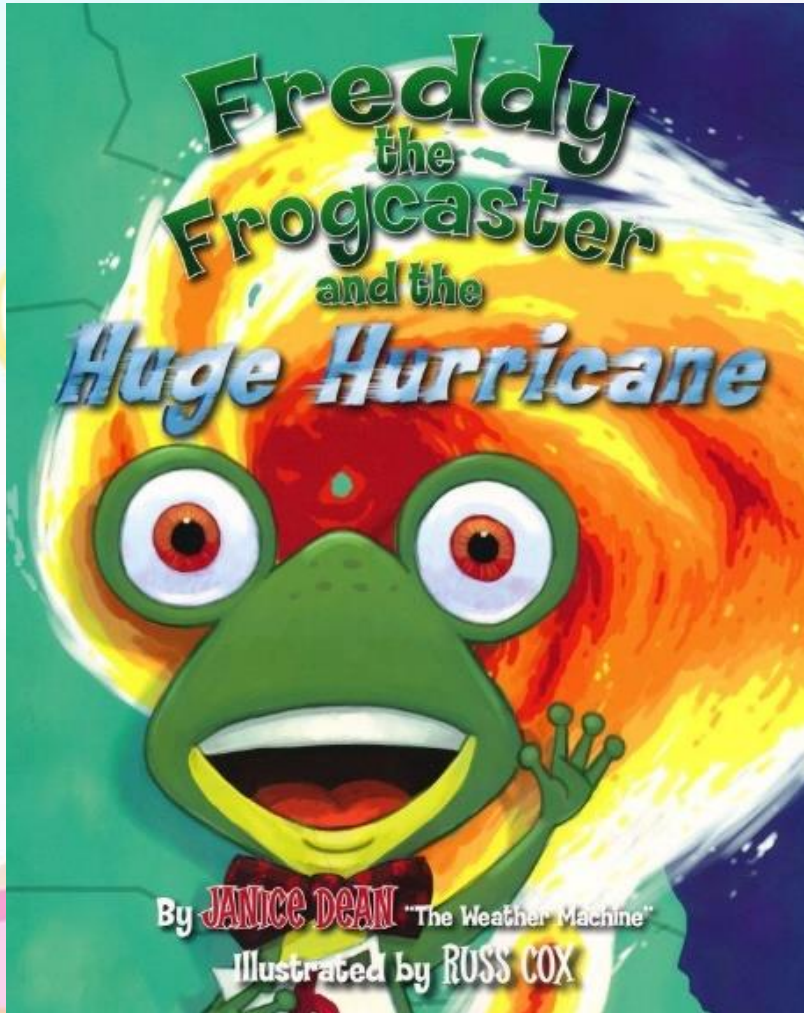


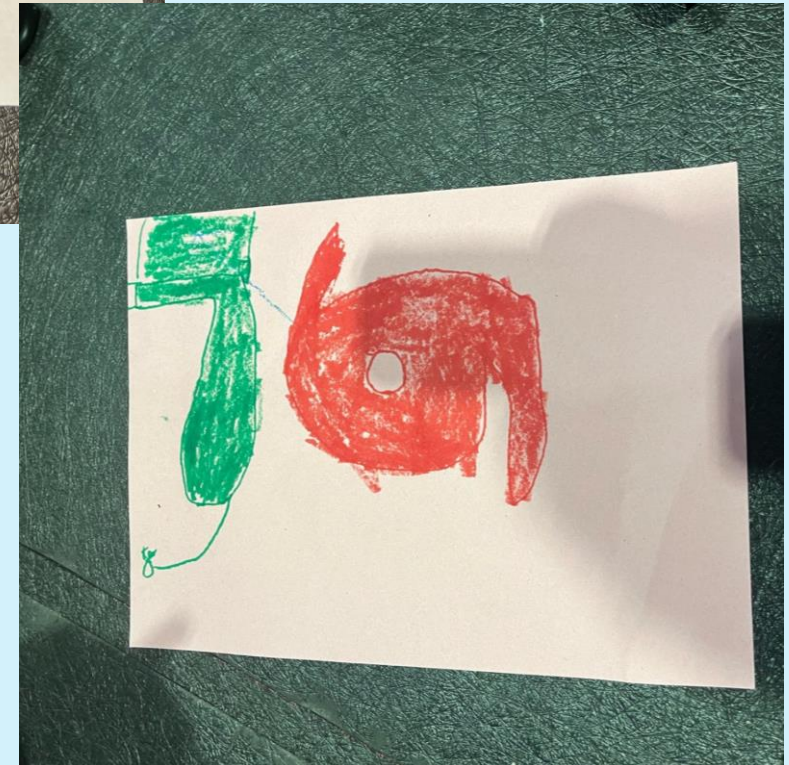
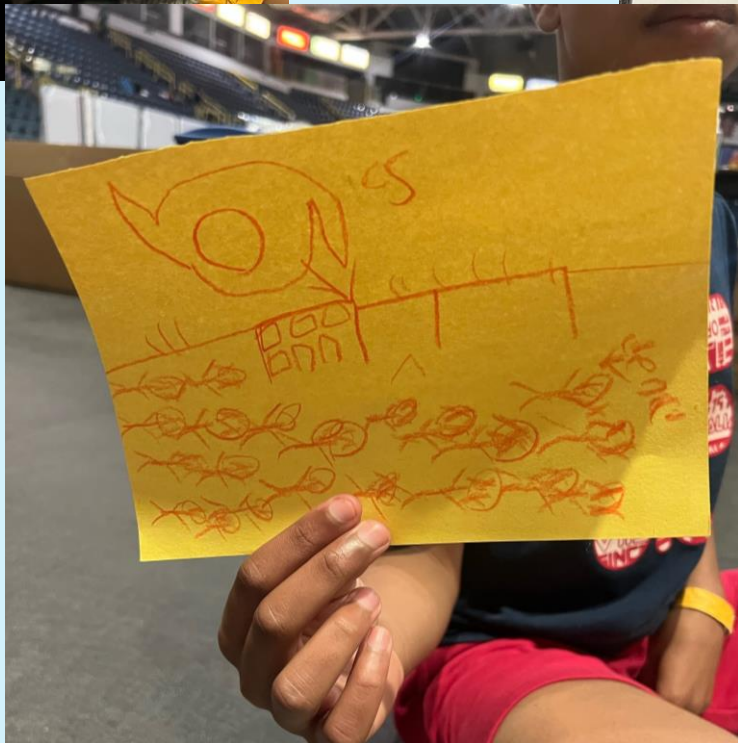
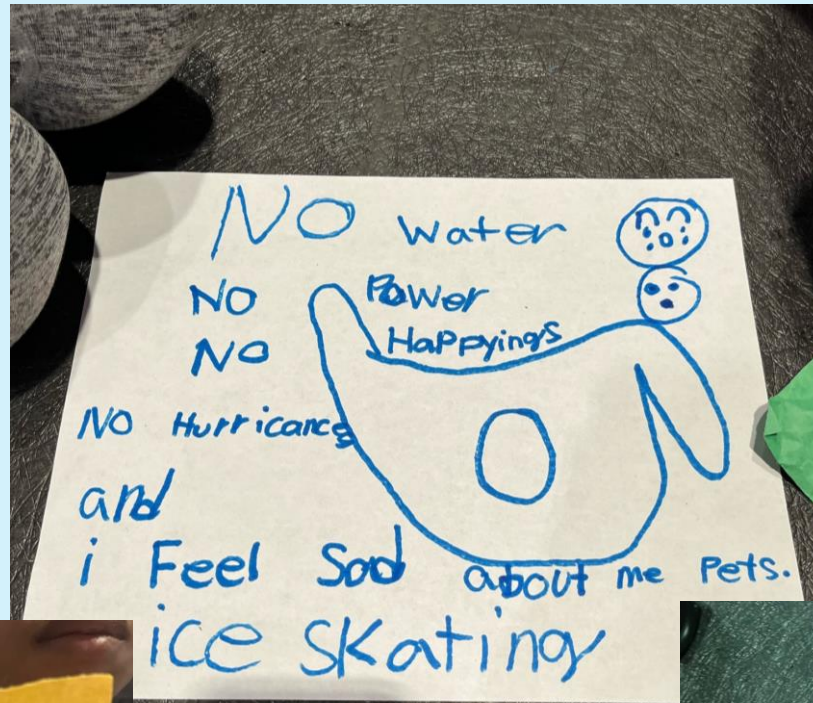
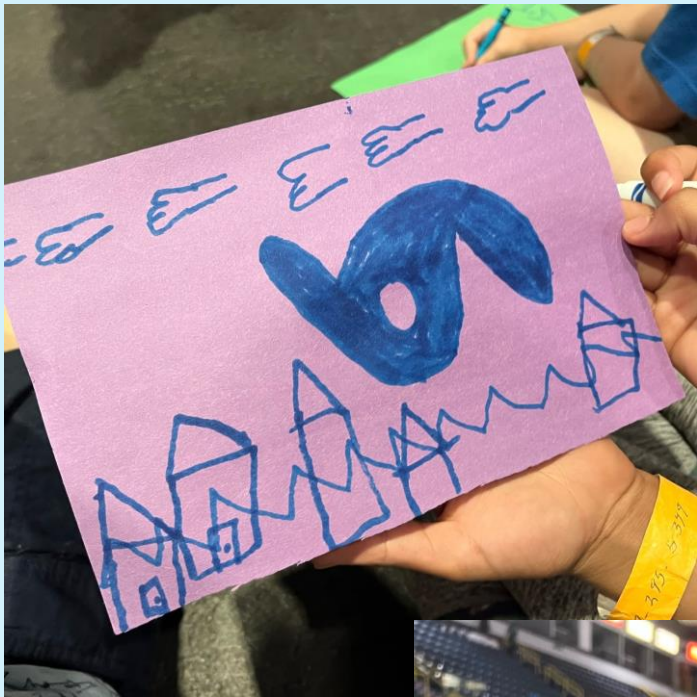






# Disaster Focused Therapeutic Activities

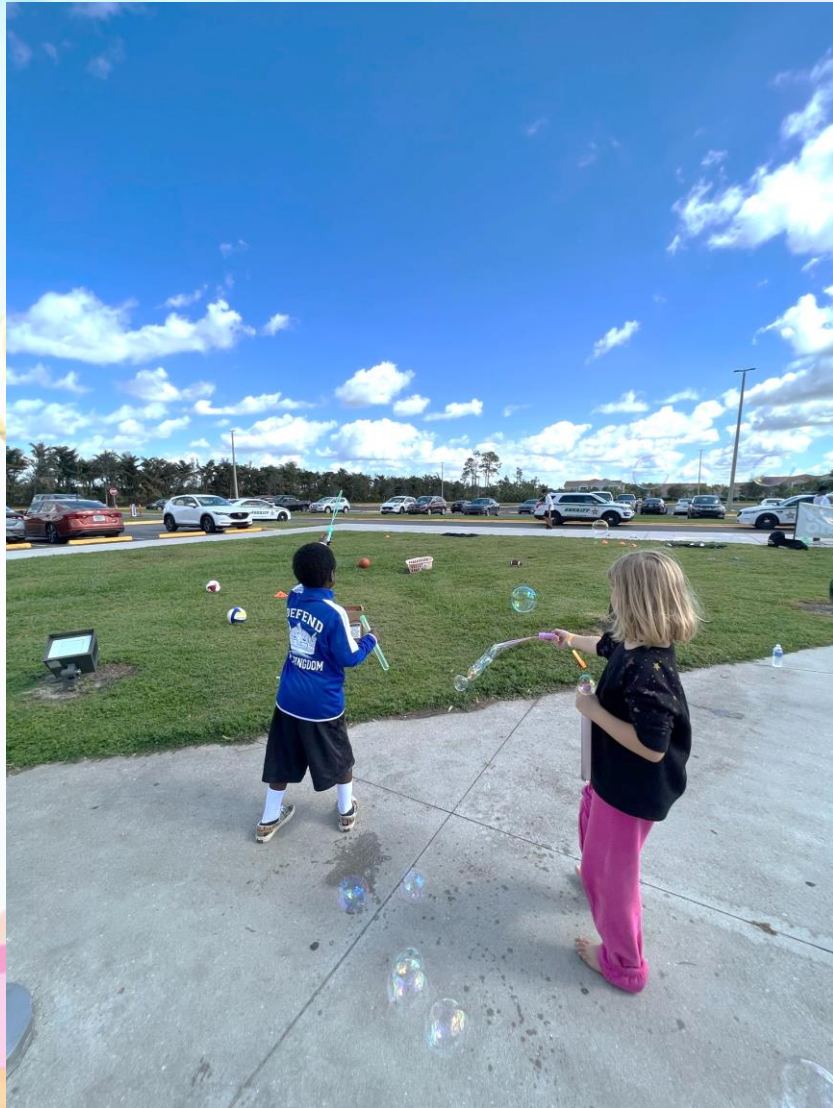




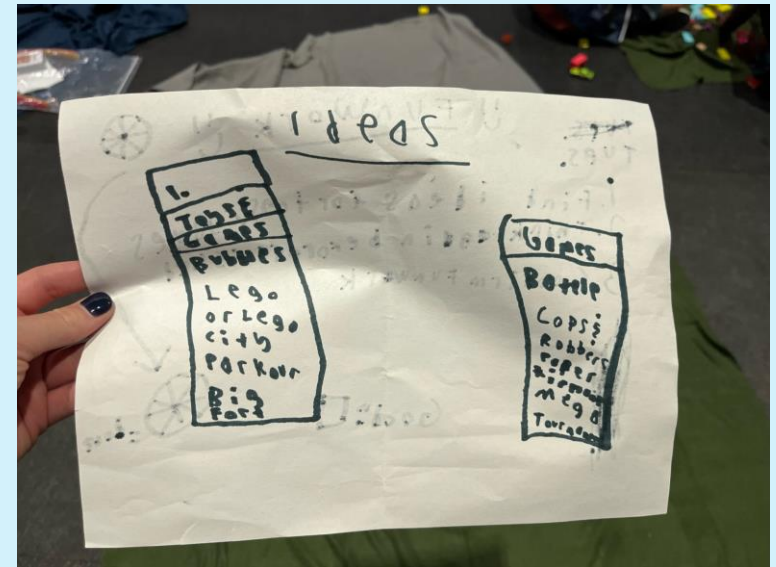
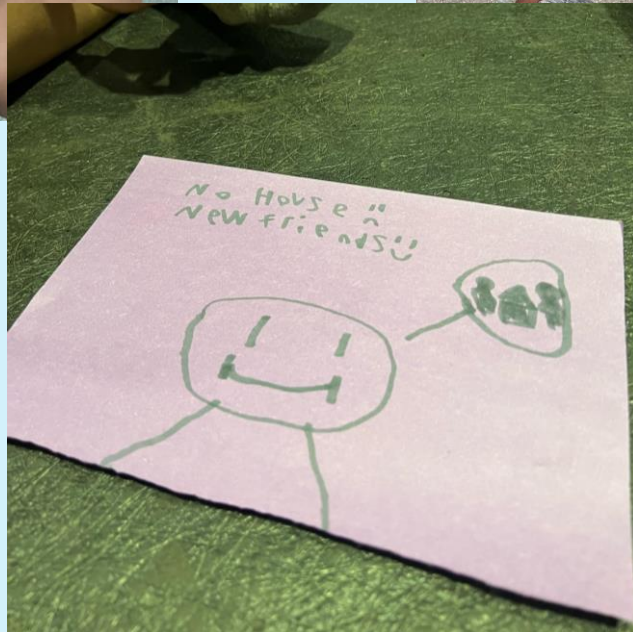
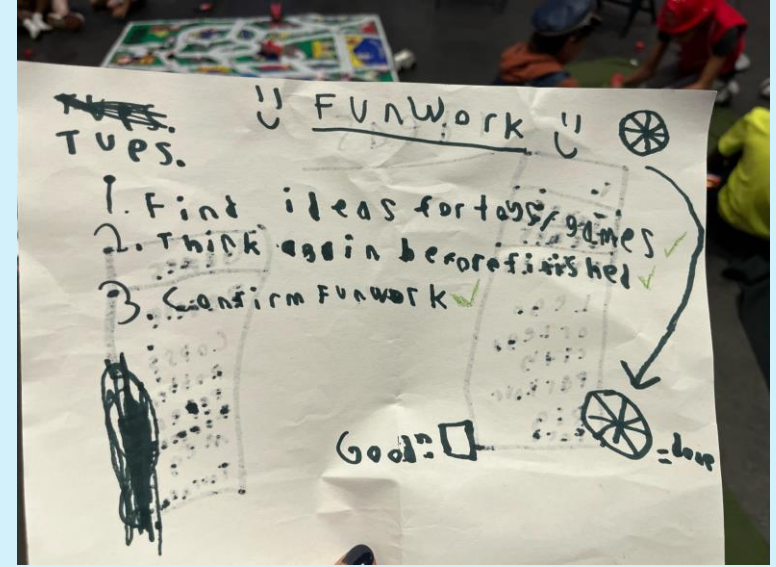




# Disaster Focused Coping Strategies



# Essential Needs #3-5: Efficacy, Connection, Hope



# Back to the Building Blocks of Child Life



**Please remember to go on  
event and fill out the  
session survey!**

