Miami, Fl – May 11, 2010 – Patricia K. Smith, Chief Information Officer of Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc., the local lead agency for child welfare in Miami and the Keys, has been selected as a winner of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce 2010 Technology Leaders of the Year Award in the Best Use of Technology category. Smith was recognized for her leadership in the development and implementation of the highly acclaimed OK Connect mobile device for child welfare caseworkers.

“Patricia Smith won for the OK Connect project because the return on investment has been measured in lives, not dollars,” said Frances P. Allegra, CEO of Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe. “The technology makes case managers more productive, frees up time to see children and adds to the case manager’s quality of life.”

Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc., the agency that provides privatized foster care and adoption services for more than 3,500 children in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, addressed the concern for the state’s system for tracking abused an abandoned youths with the OK Connect project. In 2008, Our Kids partnered with AT&T to launch OK Connect, a cutting edge mobile device for child welfare caseworkers. Using software
and equipment supplied by AT&T and Samsung, dozens of case managers now have laptops (equipped with Wifi) and Samsung Blackjack III Windows mobile phones which allow them to manage cases from the front lines. Using their mobile phone, case managers take a date, time and GPS location stamped picture of the foster children in their case load during the monthly home visit which, provides the State of Florida with irrefutable proof that children are being frequently monitored for their safety. Governor Charlie Crist recently approved an additional $6.3 million in funding to expand the program statewide.

The technology allows case managers to stay in touch and fosters productivity while protecting the privacy of the children with features like encryption and remote disabling of lost or stolen devices. Most importantly, the program has improved the agency’s monitoring capabilities by enabling it to validate that foster children have been seen, with vital details regarding where, when, and by whom.

Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc., a Florida non-profit organization, is the local lead agency for child welfare in Miami and the Keys. Its mission is to oversee and lead a coordinated system of care delivering excellence to abused, abandoned and neglected children and their families in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. For more information, visit www.ourkids.us. ###