



MEDIA ALERT

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THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF PASCO AND HERNANDO COUNTIES, INC.

FINALIST IN 2012 “NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR AWARDS”

The awards recognize nonprofit organizations who best serve the community, and who are highly fiscally responsible and accountable.

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is once again competing against top nonprofit organizations and companies within the Tampa Bay region in the hope of winning the “**2012 Nonprofit of the Year Award in Education**” at the Tampa Bay Business Journal’s (TBBJ) Nonprofit of the Year Awards ceremony on June 21.

The Coalition was honored with the distinction as “Nonprofit of the Year in Education” in both 2009 and 2010. The award recognizes nonprofits in the Tampa Bay area who not only provide quality services to the community, but also do so in a fiscally responsible and accountable way.

Betsy Kier, Assistant Executive Director and Interim-Finance Director, said the award hits home for her personally because she was there from the beginning and she knows where the Coalition came from.

“We’ve grown from a very small organization that contracted with outside agencies to provide services to the community, to a much larger, professionally run organization which provides all services in-house,” Kier said. “It’s allowed us to focus on being financially responsible, spending more than 84 percent of our budget on direct services for children.”

The application highlights the continued growth of the programs offered by the Coalition, including the income-based School Readiness program and Florida’s Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program, free for all Florida four year olds. It also focuses on the Coalition’s strategic plan for growth over five years, which was developed in 2008.

Since 2008, the Coalition has grown exponentially, achieving and working to achieve its ten outlined goals, determined by the Coalition's Board of Directors. These achievements include:

- **Creating the Foundation for Early Learning in Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.** to support the Coalition in terms of raising funds and creating awareness;
- **Increasing community outreach** by participating in community events for children, distributing free books and resources to children, and speaking at community event organizations, to include Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis Clubs;
- and **creating an incentive-based quality funding** for early childhood educators contracted with the Coalition.

"Establishing that strategic plan was critical," said Executive Director Jim Farrelly. "The plan guided us over the last four years and is the reason we are able to ensure quality education for our youngest population."

The **TBBJ "Nonprofit of the Year Awards"** include seven (7) categories: Arts, Culture and Humanities; Crisis Resource; Education; Environment and Animals; Family Services; Health and Human Services; and Public and Societal Benefit.

Recipients will be announced at an awards luncheon on **Thursday, June 21, 2012** at the A La Carte Pavilion, 4050 Dana Shores Dr. Tampa, FL 33463.

For more information about this award, including a list of finalists, please visit the TBBJ website at <http://www.bizjournals.com/Tampabay>.

For more information about the ELC and its services, visit www.phelc.org.

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is one of 31 Early Learning Coalitions in Florida. It works to ensure that programs and services are available to assist families with young children during their formative years. Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is for all children who are four-years old on or before September 1st. School Readiness provides assistance for low-to-moderate income working families by paying a portion of the childcare costs on a sliding fee schedule. Starting as separate organizations in 2000, Pasco and Hernando counties joined forces to form the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties in 2005. The non-profit serves over nine thousand children between infancy and eight years old, working with over 300 Early Childhood Educators in the counties.

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