



Media Alert

For Immediate Release

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TWO CHILDREN RECEIVE \$4,800 EARLY LEARNING GRANT FROM FOUNDATION FOR EARLY LEARNING

The Foundation for Early Learning in Pasco and Hernando Counties donates \$5,000 to sponsor one child in Hernando County and one child in Pasco County who have been on a waiting list for subsidized child care services.

Two young single moms received calls from the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. about a grant from the Foundation for Early Learning in Pasco and Hernando Counties that will help them achieve the academic goals they had shelved after becoming single parents.

The Foundation for Early Learning was developed in 2009 to assist the Coalition by educating families about the importance of Early Learning. The goal of the Foundation is to support both the more than 9,000 children, ages birth to eight, that are served by the Coalition, and the more than 300 contracted child care providers in Pasco and Hernando Counties.

“The state mandated that we provide the education for the little guys in Pasco and Hernando Counties, but they didn’t give us enough funding to do it,” said Dave Meglay, a member of both the Coalition and the Foundation Boards of Directors. “They also tied our hands to how we could raise funds. With the Foundation, we have more opportunities to do fundraising in the community.”

This is the first time the Foundation has raised enough funds to achieve its purpose, and after a unanimous decision by Foundation board members, a \$4,800 early learning grant was awarded to support two children who were on a waiting list for School Readiness services, a subsidized child care program that helps eligible families with the cost of child care.

Lauren Schafer, a young single mom raised in Holiday, FL, said the Foundation’s help in alleviating some of the cost of child care means the world to her.

“I know that might sound ridiculous, but I work for child care,” she said. “I can’t save for anything. Now that I’m getting child care help, I can start saving for college, save for things for Presley for when she’s older. I was telling everyone at work that when I get this help, I’m going to do a back flip.”

In Hernando County, Megan Fish, an Infant and Toddler Teacher at Care-A-lot Preschool, found hope when she received a call from the Coalition about the Education Grant for her one and a half year old son Brayden.

“It’s important because being a single mom, pretty much everything I make goes to child care,” Megan said.

Megan is thankful for the Foundation for Early Learning’s grant and thinks it’s a great opportunity for families who are in even harder times than she is.

“A lot of my kids have never been in day care and they’re almost 2 and they don’t know how to share. So early learning is very important. It’s a great experience.”

A great experience for Brayden, and a great experience for Megan who will finish her prerequisites and enroll in nursing school, in hopes of working in the pediatric unit at Spring Hill Regional Hospital where Brayden was born.

Meglay said this donation is important for the Foundation because it demonstrates one of its main goals: to get as many kids as possible enrolled in Early Learning programs.

“Who knows, one of the kids we helped could be president one day.,” he said. “We gave him the means to get started, the opportunity, which to me is the whole point of the Foundation.”

For more information on the Foundation, including how to donate, please visit www.phelc.org/Foundation.

For more information on how to sponsor a child, contact the Early Learning Coalition at (727) 233-8291 or visit www.phelc.org.

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

*The Early Learning Coalition is a non-profit dedicated to preparing children to enter and succeed in school, contracting with more than 300 early educators and child care centers to serve more than 9,000 children ages birth to eight in Pasco and Hernando. The two programs the Coalition monitors include **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)** and **School Readiness (SR)**. VPK is a free educational program (preschool) for every Florida four-year-old who is four years of age on or before September 1st of the school year. Every child who enrolls in this program is accepted into the program, and more than 4,500 children are enrolled in this program. SR is a subsidized child care program for parents or guardians who are working or are in school, but fall below the U.S. Federal Poverty Level. The cost to enroll one child in this program is \$10 a day, \$300 a month, \$3500 a year.*

*Other services including: **Mobile Outreach**, who two vans that distribute free books at community events upon request and lend educational materials and toys that they would not be*

able to afford on their own; **Training and Curriculum Specialists**, who offer free trainings for child care providers to improve the quality of child care; and **Inclusion Specialists** who provide onsite training and technical assistance and consultation to child care centers regarding health, developmental abilities, social-emotional and behavioral challenges as well as other special needs concerns of children ages birth to 8 years.

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