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MEDIA

ALERT

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RELEASE**

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EARLY LEARNING COALITION HONORS REGION'S EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS

Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc., treats early learning and child care providers to a special celebration in honor of Provider Appreciation Day

Pasco and Hernando counties are home to more than 350 unique child care and early learning providers. The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc., is honoring these dedicated professionals with a celebration at 6:45 p.m., Wednesday, May 20, at the Coalition's Spring Hill administrative office.

This event falls right after Provider Appreciation Day, a national day of recognition for child care and early administrators and workers. Gov. Rick Scott has proclaimed May 8 to be Provider Appreciation Day in Florida, and has set out to honor child care providers, teachers and other educators of young children across the state.

"Early Learning is in the national news daily. However, it is our dedicated local Early Educators at each of our Centers and Homes that make an incredible difference in children's lives," said Coalition Executive Director Jim Farrelly. "Provider Recognition Night gives us a unique chance to say thanks for a job well done, caring for children and preparing them to be successful in school."

Program owners, directors and assistant directors are invited to attend the Coalition's Provider Appreciation Celebration. Dr. Lori Romano, Hernando County Superintendent of Schools, will offer words of thanks and encouragement to Early Educators. Event sponsor Miguel Valazquez of Staywell, a provider of Medicaid managed services to state-supported healthcare programs, will supply light refreshments for attendees.

The celebration precedes the launch of the Coalition's Sunshine Stars rating system, an upcoming program designed to further honor exemplary providers and help parents make informed decisions about their child's care.

National Provider Appreciation Day is a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers and other educators of young children everywhere. Momentum and support for this event has grown each year and recognition presently includes individuals and government organizations throughout the United States.

To learn more or for ideas about how to thank a childcare provider, visit www.ProviderAppreciationDay.org. For more information about the Coalition and its services, visit www.phelc.org.

About the Coalition

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is one of 30 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 subsidized child care for low-to-moderate income working families. 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 9,000 children between infancy and eight years old, working with more than 300 providers in the counties.

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