

Early Learning....

Gertrude Walden Child Care Center



Building
today's
children

into
tomorrow's
leaders!



Peace Lutheran Preschool—voting for governor

2014-2015 Annual Report

Early Learning Coalition of

Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties, Inc.



A Message from the CEO

Literacy is the fundamental building block to success. Our goal at the Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin & Okeechobee counties is that every child begins their journey to success by ensuring they have access to a quality preschool experience.

This past year brought many changes starting at the Federal level. In November 2014, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was reauthorized. The changes over the next 5 years will place a greater emphasis on quality in preschools and positive outcomes for children.

At the State level, the Office of Early Learning began revamping the Child Care Resource and Referral component of our services. These changes will increase awareness and stronger collaboration with community partners. Ultimately this will strengthen the family's foundation of services available in each county.

Locally, we've increased our outreach services in all 3 counties. This added exposure informs parents of the services we offer. Our Storybook Forest events and our Touch-a-Truck were huge hits with the communities. We anticipate these events to continue to grow and strengthen. We will continue to streamline and update our operations and functions at ELCIRMO. By doing this, we are able to filter a higher percentage of our grant dollars to direct services for our children.

I would like to give a special thanks to our Board Members for their selfless service to our mission. In addition, I would like to thank my staff for their incredible work and flexibility throughout the transitions that have taken place. They are a valuable part of our work.

Jacki Jackson
CEO



Mission:

Partnering with parents, providers and communities to ensure quality early learning experiences through programmatic and financial support.



Vision:

Building Blocks for Educational Success

School Readiness

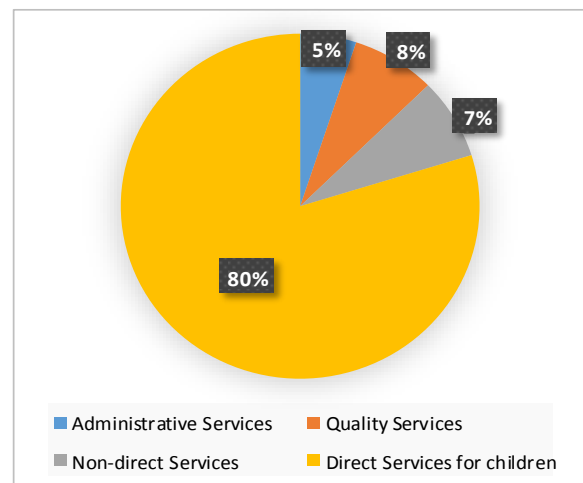
The School Readiness program provides early care and education services to low income families. Priority for the School Readiness program is given to parents that receive temporary cash assistance and children that are determined to be at-risk of abuse or neglect. The second priority level are those families whose income is up to 150% of the federal poverty level, who must be working a minimum of 20 hours per week or are a full-time student. Families must pay a copayment for child care based on income and family size. Financial assistance is essential for many families to be self-sufficient, knowing their children are cared for in a high quality educational program.

In 2014-15, the Coalition contracted with 118 School Readiness providers, affording parents the opportunity to choose the type of provider that best meets their needs, selecting from Family Child Care Homes, Private Child Care Facilities and Public School settings. All School Readiness contracted providers must implement a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, contributing to a quality early learning experience.

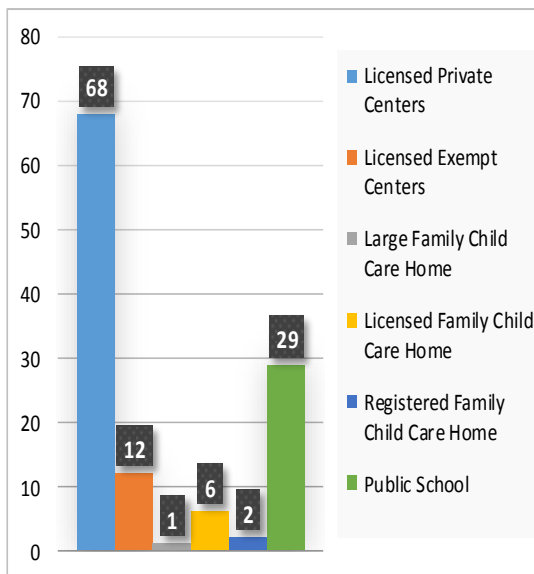
Performance Funding Pilot

Florida legislature approved a special pilot project in 2014-2015 to determine whether specific training approaches improve how children perform in the school readiness program. Child care providers were selected by Florida's Office of Early Learning to participate in the pilot. Those selected had the opportunity to earn additional compensation for showing improved outcomes. Nine of ELC's contracted providers participated in the program, resulting in over \$203,000 compensation for the providers and over \$18,000 for the coalition. The program was such a success, it is being offered again in 2015-2016.

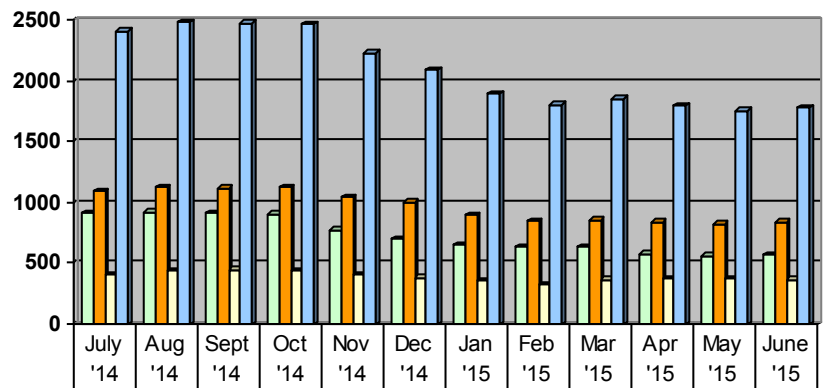
School Readiness Expenditures



Types of School Readiness Providers



Number of School Readiness Children Served by County



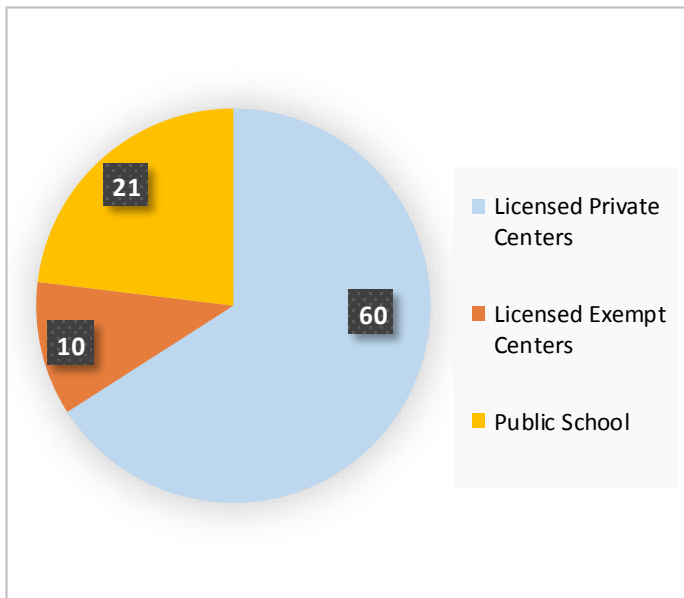
County	July '14	Aug '14	Sept '14	Oct '14	Nov '14	Dec '14	Jan '15	Feb '15	Mar '15	Apr '15	May '15	June '15
Indian River	910	922	917	907	775	704	649	637	635	581	558	570
Martin	1,097	1,131	1,117	1,126	1,049	1,003	896	847	858	841	824	844
Okeechobee	407	437	445	441	407	385	355	326	362	377	373	367
Total	2,414	2,490	2,479	2,474	2,231	2,092	1,900	1,810	1,855	1,799	1,755	1,781

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

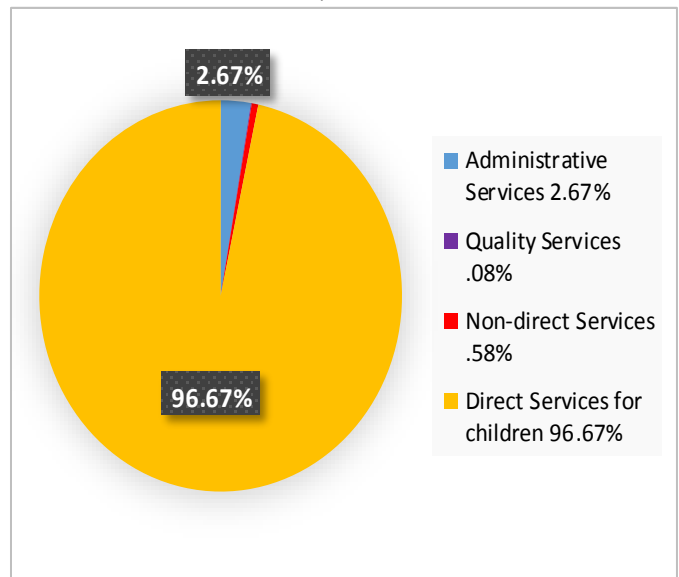
All children, regardless of family income level, are eligible to receive FREE VPK services. Children must be 4-years old on or before September 1 of the current year to be eligible for enrollment in the program. The family may choose from either the school year program (540 hours) or the summer program (300 hours). In 2014-2015 there were 91 VPK contracted providers from which parents could choose. Types of providers include faith-based, private centers and public school settings.

Voluntary Pre-kindergarten helps children perform better in school and throughout life with quality programs offering high literacy standards, accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors. At the beginning of kindergarten, each child is screened to provide a snapshot of the child's readiness for kindergarten and progress in achieving the VPK performance standards. The tool used to assess the child's readiness is called the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS).

Types of VPK Providers



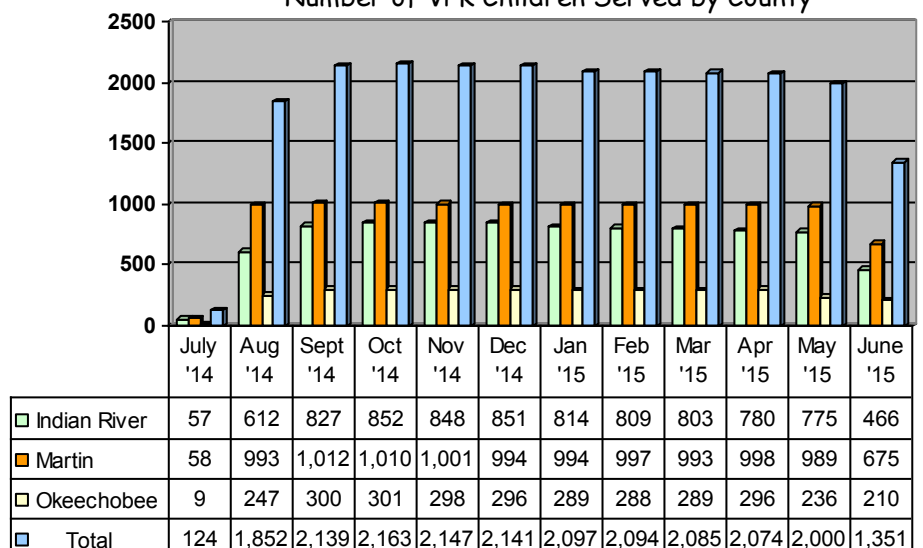
VPK Expenditures



VPK Online Registration

This was the first complete year of the online registration portal for families.

Number of VPK Children Served by County



Our Programs and Services

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)

Child Care Resource and Referral links parents to early learning programs and other agencies in the community. CCR&R maintains a database of all legally operating early learning programs in Indian River, Martin, and Okeechobee counties. Families moving into the area may contact the coalition for information regarding child care School Readiness programs, Voluntary Pre-kindergarten programs, and other resources that may be available.

- ◆ 595 interviews were conducted to assist families in finding quality child care.
- ◆ 363 child care referrals were issued to families to locate child care, based on their criteria.
- ◆ 476 families were offered additional resources, besides child care, to assist their families.

Inclusion Services

The Coalition helps to expand child care options for children with disabilities and their families by supporting the inclusion of children with special needs in early childhood settings. Program Team staff work closely with child care providers to facilitate learning for all children. Behavioral and developmental concerns are addressed by Program Team staff while at the facility for technical assistance, which has decreased the demand for separate inclusion services. A toll-free Warm Line is available to providers and parents requesting information. In 2014-15, staff received and responded to 46 Warm Line calls, resulting in 23 classroom observations and 55 referrals. Where appropriate, technical assistance was offered, including recommending strategies to help children who are experiencing problems.

School Readiness Developmental Screenings

All children ages birth to 5 who participate in the School Readiness Program must receive a developmental screening. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is used for the screening. The purpose of a developmental screening is to capture a snapshot of a child's development at a single point in time. When screenings are given regularly, they provide information for tracking a child's developmental progress. That helps identify children who may not meet the milestones appropriate for their age and might benefit from further assessment and follow-up. New legislation, effective July 1, 2013, required that initial screens be administered no later than 45 days after initial enrollment and thereafter in the month of the child's birthday. Child care providers administered 1,681 developmental screens that were reviewed by the Program Team and follow-up was conducted, as appropriate.

School Readiness Developmental Assessments

Developmental assessments, using developmentally appropriate tools, occur within 90 days of the school year as a pre-assessment and a post-assessment follows within the next six months. This assessment data is collected, analyzed and reviewed with child care providers. Technical assistance is conducted targeting teaching strategies and activities that will impact areas of concern in the classroom.

VPK Assessments

Florida law requires all private and public VPK providers to use the Florida VPK Assessment as a pre- and post-assessment for each child in the VPK program. The VPK Assessment includes progress monitoring measures in the areas of print knowledge, phonological awareness, mathematics, and oral language/vocabulary that are aligned with the *Standards for Four-Year Olds*.

Monitoring

Curriculum Monitoring is conducted annually in classrooms of School Readiness contracted providers. In the event of non-compliance, technical assistance is offered and re-visits are scheduled. In 2014-15, curriculum monitoring was conducted in 63 School Readiness facilities.

Program Assessments

The Program Team conducted on-site Program Assessments to assess quality and offer technical assistance. Tools used are the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Environment Rating Scale (ERS). Assessments were administered in 59 classrooms—not including those paid for by the Performance Funding Pilot. Any observed violations were reported to DCF. CLASS is an observation-based program assessment instrument that measures teacher-child interactions in three areas—emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. It describes multiple teaching components linked to student achievement and social development.

At the end of the year, data was analyzed and grouped by “tiers” to establish stipend levels to reward facilities that met or exceeded standards. In all, 52 providers received a stipend, totaling \$26,000.

Early Literacy

The Coalition recognizes the importance of early literacy in the development of children, beginning at birth. Child care providers participate in statewide and local activities designed to enhance early literacy skills and many activities are incorporated into their daily curricula.

Celebrate Literacy Week. As part of the 6th Annual *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!’s Million Minute Marathon*, a simultaneous reading activity took place where students and teachers across Florida had committed to reading more than 33 million minutes combined. The coalition’s providers contributed to this effort by reading the books “*Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*” by Mo Willems, to infants and toddlers and “*Time to Sleep*” by Denise Fleming to the 3-5 year old children. Global Learning of Stuart’s submission to the Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida Cozy Corner Photo Contest was selected as the third place winner. The center received a gift basket filled with classroom supplies and books, valued at \$100.

Mentoring for Success in Early Education. Through a collaborative effort with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Indian River County, Bridges Early Learning Center and Schools Depot (child care providers), an early literacy grant was awarded from the Indian River Community Foundation to fund a one-to-one mentoring program. The program was designed to improve literacy skills and pre-kindergarten readiness of participating 3 and 4-year old children.

Jumpstart Read for the Record. Millions of individuals came together to celebrate literacy and support early childhood education. The book, “*Bunny Cakes*”, by Rosemary Wells, was read by all across the state.

LaPetite Academy—Staying healthy & fit



Apple Tree —Jumpstart Read for the Record



Training and Technical Assistance

With a continued focus on improving the quality of child care, the Coalition's Quality Specialists made numerous technical assistance visits throughout the year. Technical assistance is based on the individual needs of each provider. Topics included: developmentally appropriate practices, curriculum, lesson plans, room arrangement, School Readiness monitoring, screens and assessments, inclusion, behavior, interaction, and classroom management.

Instructor-led training is offered at no cost for Providers. The Program Team conducted 16 training presentations, comprising 34 hours of training, for 351 participants. Training topics included:

- ◆ *Birth to Four Developmental Standards*
- ◆ *Let's Get Creative*
- ◆ *Discovering Play Stations*
- ◆ *I Love that Story*
- ◆ *Planning for Young Children*
- ◆ *Classroom Management*
- ◆ *Environmental Rating Scale*
- ◆ *VPK Assessment*
- ◆ *Integrating the VPK Standards: Phonological Awareness*
- ◆ *CLASS 20-hr. MMCI (Making the Most of Classroom Interactions)*

A special training event, The Learning Groove, was contracted to perform a training rich in literacy and inclusive practices for early childhood practitioners.

The Learning Groove attendees



MMCI attendees



Professional Development

In addition to the numerous trainings offered to the child care providers, staff members are continually enhancing their skills and knowledge by attending conferences and training, participating in webinars, and cross-training among themselves. Conferences included One Goal Summer Conference, Florida Association for the Education of Young Children Conference (FLAEYC), Child Sex Abuse Training, and Leadership Team Building, just to name a few.

Program Team staff have spent numerous hours of training in order to become certified in various areas, making them more valuable to our child care providers. ELCIRMO staff is certified in the following:

- ◆ Certified CLASS Observer for Pre-K
- ◆ Certified CLASS Trainer
- ◆ Certified CLASS Observer for Toddlers
- ◆ Certified CLASS Observer for Infants
- ◆ MMCI Instructor (Making the Most of Classroom Interactions)

Staff continues to renew their certifications, while becoming certified in additional areas, as mandated.

Education Stipends were awarded to practitioners and directors at School Readiness facilities for completing college courses, to promote professional development. A total of \$10,800 was awarded to 18 individuals.

Success Story!

When the knock came at our door two years ago, our life took a drastic turn. Our little boy arrived barefoot and in desperate need of love and attention. As happy as we were, there were definitely financial worries. How were we going to provide daycare as well as everything else needed for a 2-year old.

I was told about Early Learning Coalition and all they do to help. I called and made the appointment. I was expecting a long drawn out process to receive the help needed to enroll him, but the day of my appointment I walked out 15 minutes later with the waiver for daycare in my hand. I have always been treated sweetly by the staff and the process has taken no more than 15 minutes each time.

I am forever grateful to the Early Learning Coalition for helping my family out at a time of need. Mostly, for helping us provide daycare for our little boy. Thank you!

Outreach & Community Awareness

Coalition staff participated in outreach activities designed to provide consumer education. Events included: House of Hope Energy Fair, Touch-a-Truck hosted by Childcare Resources, Gertrude Walden's Health & Safety Event, Healthy Start Martin County's Fall Fest, Okeechobee Health & Safety Expo, and Head Start's Community Day Fair.

Other initiatives included:

- ◆ In honor of the 20th Annual Children's Week, April 12-17, 2015 paper cut-outs of children's hands decorated by the children were hung in the Capitol Rotunda in Tallahassee. The hands remained in the Rotunda the entire week and served as a reminder to legislators and advocates that we must take care of our most precious commodity, our children. Proclamations were presented from the Boards of County Commissioners in all three counties and the City of Sebastian.
- ◆ Storybooks came alive at the Storybook Forest in Flagler Park, where children visited booths themed after their favorite stories, played games, made colorful crafts and visited with Clifford the Big Red Dog, Curious George and the City of Stuart's Sammi the Sailfish. Stuart City Councilwoman, Eula Clarke, was on hand to open the event with a ribbon cutting.
- ◆ More than 300 Martin County children received the gift of reading in time for the holidays thanks to a partnership between the Martin County Library System and the Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties. Through the library system's Season's Readings program, the Friends of the Martin County Library System provided an estimated 325 age-appropriate books that were delivered to 3 to 5-year-old Martin County children enrolled with ELC.
- ◆ The coalition participated in distributing vouchers to eligible Martin County children to receive free water safety and swimming lessons. Sponsored by the Children's Services Council of Martin County, the SPLASH program, which stands for "Swimming Provides Learners with Aquatics Safety & Health," was created in 2012 to reduce the child death rate in Martin County.
- ◆ The coalition participated in distributing vouchers to needy families in Martin County enabling them to receive toys and food through the White Doves Holiday Project sponsored by the United Way of Martin County. ELC staff also took part in distributing the gifts.
- ◆ The Coalition acts as a referring agency for eligible families in Martin County by distributing vouchers to Caring Children Clothing Children (the 4C's). The vouchers enable children to receive clothing and shoes.
- ◆ ELC staff donated backpacks filled with supplies to Devereux CBC of Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast for children in foster care.
- ◆ Sponsored by Hair Cuttery's Share a Haircut Program in Indian River County, ELC distributed vouchers to needy families for a shampoo & haircut.



Storybook Forest



Spinart at Touch-a-Truck hosted by Childcare Resources



ELC donated backpacks to Devereux CBC

Through the eyes of a child

Little Rising Starts—learning about amphibians



Kids First of Stuart



The Learning Cove



EOC Head Start



EOC Head Start



Kids First of Stuart



Temple Beit HaYam



Peace Lutheran, Okeechobee



Little Rising Stars



The Learning Nest—cooking project



Little Rising Stars



Community Partners & Funders

The Coalition partners with agencies to assist families with additional services.

- ◆ 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast
- ◆ Big Brothers Big Sisters
- ◆ CareerSource Research Coast
- ◆ Center for Autism & Related Disabilities
- ◆ Department of Children and Families
- ◆ Devereux CBC of Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast
- ◆ East Coast Migrant Head Start Project
- ◆ Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River
- ◆ C.A.S.T.L.E.
- ◆ Father and Child Resource Center
- ◆ Florida Diagnostic Learning & Resource System
- ◆ Health Department of Indian River County
- ◆ Health Department of Martin County
- ◆ Health Department of Okeechobee County
- ◆ Healthy Families Martin-Okeechobee
- ◆ Helping People Succeed
- ◆ Indian River County Healthy Start Coalition
- ◆ Indian River County School District
- ◆ Indiantown Even Start Family Literacy Program
- ◆ Martin County Healthy Start Coalition
- ◆ Martin County School District
- ◆ Martin County School District Head Start
- ◆ Okeechobee County School District
- ◆ Okeechobee Library System
- ◆ Tykes and Teens
- ◆ Whole Child Connection



United Way Martin County grant award—summer slide backpacks

Funders and Donors:

- ◆ Children's Services Council of Martin County
- ◆ Children's Services Council of Okeechobee
- ◆ Children's Services Advisory Council of Indian River
- ◆ Grand Harbor Community Outreach Program
- ◆ United Way of Indian River
- ◆ United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades & Okeechobee
- ◆ United Way of Martin County
- ◆ Publix Super Market Charities
- ◆ Katherine & Richard Garlington Fund
- ◆ The Ted and Lorraine Glasrud Family Foundation, Inc.
- ◆ Palm Beach & Martin County Great Give
- ◆ FPL (donor designations)
- ◆ United Way of Martin County (donor designations)
- ◆ United Way of Brevard County (donor designations)
- ◆ Attorney Phillip DeBerard (in-kind)

Success Story!

In June of 2012, two little boys started attending our summer camp program. The boy's parents had recently separated and they were experiencing a lot of change in their lives. The parents had decided that it would be best for the boys to spend a week living at mom's house and a week living at dad's. This was very unsettling for the boys and most who have worked with children know, it was a huge time of transition for them.

Most adults do not realize the stress and confusion that simply changing a daily schedule brings much less rotating homes every other week. Needless to say, our staff began to experience behavior issues and emotional meltdowns with the boys daily. The experiences seemed heightened on "drop off and pick up" days. Just as sure as they would be getting acquainted with the routine, it would be time to change it up again.

In this ever trying time for this family, they were able to qualify for SR funds. Because of the funding they received for their children to attend preschool, the boys were able to receive the daily consistency that our program provides. This may seem small to most, but in a time in their lives when what they needed to thrive was constancy, the Coalition was able to aide in that need. Because the Coalition provided financial assistance for this family, we were able to meet a far greater need.

The boys still attend our school and are well adjusted and thriving.



Board of Directors

Legislatively Mandated Members

Department of Children and Families Tom Peer
District Superintendent of Schools or designee Kim McCorrison / Brooke Flood
Regional Workforce Development Board..... Richard Stetson
President of a Florida College System or designee..... Donna Rivett
Board of County Commissioners, appointee Louise Hubbard
Head Start Director Terri Marder
County Health Department Director or designee Lison Philor-Jonnassaint
Children's Services Council or juvenile welfare board Cathleen Blair
Representative of Programs for Children with Disabilities Sandy Akre
Representative of Private Child Care Provider Deborah Schooley
Representative of Faith-Based Provider Ann Holmes

Private Sector Business Members

The Tucker Group, LLC Governor Appointed Chair Brandon Tucker
..... Governor Appointee Vacant
..... Governor Appointee Vacant
Coastal Deck & Pools Barbara Spilman
Publix Supermarkets John Locke
Piper Aircraft Lisa Giessert
Okeechobee Christian Academy Sabina Guthrie
Lochinvar Capital Management, LLC William Laughlin

TOUCH-A-TRUCK



Hosted by the ELC Board Members, with the assistance of consultant, Lisa Holland of Team Holland, the inaugural Touch-a-Truck fundraising event was held in May. Although it was a hot day, that did not deter the over 3,000 attendees who explored, climbed on, and tooted the horns of their favorite trucks and had a great day. The event raised over \$5,000 to support the Coalition's programs.

Trucks and activities were supplied by: Stuart Jet Center, Mancil's Sitework, Martin County School Board, Frenchy's Crane, Mi Cabana, Larry Fryer, Reliable Towing, US Coast Guard, Big Johnson Concrete Pump, Leighton Systems, Martin County Fire Rescue, Stuart Police Department, Martin County Sheriff's Department, Waste Management, City of Stuart, Truly Nolan, Island Party Rentals, Goodwill, Faith Farm Ministries, Pediatric Dentistry of the Treasure Coast, Stuart Macaroni Kid, Healthy Home Company, C2 Cookies and Cupcakes, Home Depot, Camelot Community Care, YMCA, and I9 Sports.

Early Learning....

The keys to success



June 2015: Thirteen years ago these students graduated from Peace Lutheran Preschool in Okeechobee. They have grown to be outstanding young men and women who are now graduating from high school.