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MEDIA RELEASE

Palmetto, FL
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FLORIDA WINEFEST & AUCTION AWARDS \$8,000 GRANT TO THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION FOR EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM IN MANATEE COUNTY

Palmetto, Florida, June 1, 2016 – The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Manatee County, Inc. has been awarded an \$8,000 grant from the Florida Winefest & Auction, Inc. The grant is for implementing the nationally renowned "Raising a Reader" program, whose network offers an evidence-based early literacy and parent engagement program that has demonstrated improvement in the reading readiness skills of children from birth to age five. The program engages parents in a routine of daily book reading with their children to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding, and early literacy skills critical for school success and connects the family to local libraries. The program will address the community need for children to be ready for school and impact the children's ability to read at grade-level, upon entering kindergarten.

Community partners include Tiny Tots University and Kids on the Rock, and this program will provide preschool children in both centers with a weekly supply of books that will help families develop, practice and maintain home-based literacy routines critical for school success. Approximately 80 three, four, and five-year old children per year will be served. Each child will receive approximately 100 books per year. The books are rotated back to the classrooms and are provided to new groups of children over the life of the books. The Early Learning Coalition's nationally-certified coordinator will train preschool teachers and parents on how to engage their child by sharing a book. At the culmination of the program, families will be connected to the public library of their choice to continue the practice of borrowing books and reading. The Raising a Reader program is aligned with the ELC's involvement in the regional Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The Campaign is spearheaded by the Patterson Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the Manatee Community Foundation, the School District of Sarasota County, the School District of Manatee County, the United Way of Manatee County, the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee.

The Florida Winefest and Auction, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit organization that provides funding to qualified charitable organizations for programs assisting disadvantaged children, youth, and families in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. They are celebrating their 26th year of supporting charities and have awarded \$8.2 million in grants to 84 different charities since 1991. Visit www.floridawinefest.org, for more information.

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Inc. is a multi-service agency dedicated to helping children develop skills that they will need to be successful in school and life. The agency's focus is on high quality school readiness opportunities for all children and their families, understanding that it is in the first years of life that a child's future educational success is determined and the critical role of parents, as their child's first and most important teacher. To learn more about Coalition's services, go to www.elc-manatee.org or call 941-757-2900, extension 212.



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