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ELC Mission & Vision

Mission

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary

President's Message



It is my pleasure to bring you the good news that Governor Charlie Crist recently announced the availability of dollars for early learning from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Below is an excerpt of his news release (you may visit <http://www.flgov.com/release/10666> to read the release in its entirety).

"TALLAHASSEE - Governor Charlie Crist, continuing his efforts to reinvigorate Florida's economy, today announced the availability of \$105 million in federal economic stimulus funds over three years for Florida's Early Learning program. The stimulus funding will be distributed to the state's Early Learning Coalitions by the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation to provide additional child care opportunities for income-eligible parents and help enhance the quality of child care services to children and families."

The amount allocated to serve the families of Miami-Dade and Monroe is just over \$5.7 million. While we are indeed very fortunate to have access to these dollars to serve the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, part of my responsibility is to keep us focused and grounded. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Our number one priority for these dollars is to stimulate the local economy by maintaining or creating child care slots. This will allow children to participate in high-quality early care and education programs so that their parents/caregivers are able to work. The other priority, as stated in the Governor's release, is to "help enhance the quality of child care services to children and families."
- There are currently 28,000 children enrolled in the School Readiness program at an average daily cost of \$355,000. \$5.7 million pays for 16 days of care. In terms of the number of children that will be served with these dollars, it is approximately 1,400 over a one-year period.

In anticipation of receiving these dollars we began enrolling children in the School Readiness program. Adding children to the program before the dollars were received has helped many families with child care expenses when they needed it most. As a result, we will not see a large surge in enrollment. As children leave the program new children will be enrolled.

Using the stimulus dollars to provide a high-quality early education to the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties and supporting the work of our early care and education providers continues to be our number one priority. We look forward to working in partnership with our entire community to use these dollars to help as many families as possible.

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres

pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

Vision

To ensure a comprehensive and integrated system providing for all families and their children, beginning before birth to 5 years, the affordable opportunity to enter school ready to learn and succeed in life.

Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings

Finance
April 27 at 8:00 a.m.
ELC Board Room

Program & Strategy
April 29 at 1:00 p.m.
ELC Board Room

President & CEO
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

Important Announcements

Recycle, Reduce, Reuse: The Coalition is Going Green and Reducing Our Use of Paper!

In our continuing efforts to go green as well as be fiscally conscientious, we are reducing our use of paper. This means we will no longer print and mail the Provider News Alert in bulk. In order to keep you informed and up-to-date we will continue to send the news alerts via email and fax blast. The current and archived issues are also available to download from our website. Please visit http://elcmdm.org/newsroom/news_alerts.htm.



If you do not have internet access at your center or home, visiting your library is a wonderful and free alternative. It is also a perfect resource for caregivers and early childhood educators, as you can also check out some great books to read to your children. If a trip to your local library is not a convenient destination, please call Gabriel Carreras at (305) 646-7220, ext. 276 and he will be happy to mail you a copy of the news alert.

ELC Grievance Policy and Procedures

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe has established a grievance policy and procedures designed to provide prompt and orderly resolution of complaints or disputes arising in the course of conducting business with, receiving services from, and/or providing services to the Coalition. Any party has the right to present their grievance to the Coalition within thirty (30) days of an occurrence, or within thirty (30) days of a party having reasonable knowledge of said matter.

Grievance(s) must be submitted in written form (electronic or mail) to the client services manager to the following address:

Client Services Manager
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134
asoto@elcmdm.org

A written acknowledgement of the grievance will be provided within seven (7) business days of receipt. Should the Coalition require additional time to review the matter, the party shall be advised in writing within the initial seven (7) day period.

Complaints and disputes may be resolved during this initial contact and thus would not require further action. An earnest effort is to be made by all parties involved to resolve matters within thirty (30) days. A written resolution will be submitted by the client services manager within ten (10) business days of resolution.

In the event the party is not satisfied with the outcome provided by the client services manager on behalf of the Coalition, they must identify in writing the

specific unresolved issue(s) and the resolution being sought within thirty (30) days of the response and address it to:

Provider Services Committee
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134

A written acknowledgement of the grievance will be provided within seven (7) business days of receipt. Should the Provider Services Committee require additional time to review the matter, the party shall be advised in writing within the initial seven (7) day period.

In the event the Provider Services Committee is unable to resolve the matter, or a potential resolution requires action by the board of directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, the grievance shall be presented for resolution before the full board by the chairperson of the Provider Services Committee on behalf of all involved parties. The result will be the final outcome on behalf of the Coalition unless otherwise stated by Florida law.

In the event the party is not satisfied with the outcome provided by the Provider Services Committee and/or the Coalition's board of directors, they may seek legal remedies as afforded under the laws of the state of Florida.

To print out the Notice of Grievance & Request for Review form, please visit <http://www.elcmdm.org/Providers/formsPolicies/FormsPolicies.html>.



[You May Win a \\$100 Visa Gift Card by Participating in a Survey Regarding Transition Practices from Early Education Programs to Kindergarten Classrooms](#)

The Early Learning Coalition, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and Ready Schools Miami are interested in learning more about the transition practices that exist between early childhood education programs and kindergarten classrooms. We will use your feedback to develop and provide resources that support schools and early childhood programs in creating warm, welcoming, effective transitions for young children when they enter kindergarten. Please visit

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=vleA456lx5dOfX8aNrdWfw_3d_3d to complete this brief survey online.

Respondents who submit their completed survey by close of business on Friday, May 1, 2009, will be eligible to enter a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card. Five gift certificates will be given away on Monday, May 4, 2009, courtesy of Ready Schools Miami.

NIEER Says the Economy is Threatening Enrollment and Funding for State Preschool Programs

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), a unit of the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, published a press release on April 8, 2009, entitled, "Economy Threatens Impressive Expansion of State Pre-K Programs: Federal Program Called for to Help States Increase Quality, Enrollment." The release states that there has been an impressive expansion in early childhood education enrollment and spending but in light of the recent economic recession, this trend may be reversed, particularly for families earning low- to middle-incomes.

NIEER also released *The State of Preschool 2008* which outlines their research results of state preschool programs based on location, enrollment, and funding. To learn more details about NIEER's valuable findings, you are welcome to read their press release in its entirety at

<http://www.elcmdm.org/newsroom/EarlyChildhoodReports.html>.

Enter the Coalition's Drawing to Attend the 9th Triennial ICYCC Free of Charge

Child advocates from around the world will convene in South Florida on Tuesday, May 26 through Friday, May 29, 2009, at the 9th Triennial International Child & Youth Care Conference (ICYCC) in the Greater Fort Lauderdale Broward County Convention Center. David Lawrence, Jr. will be the keynote speaker and this year's conference will focus on children, youth, and families in the child welfare system.

We are pleased to announce that the Coalition will select five (5) providers from a drawing to attend the conference free of charge. To submit your entry into the drawing, please send your name, the name of your center, address, and phone number to Alina Soto at asoto@elcmdm.org. Entries must be received by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Monday, May 4, 2009. The drawing will be held that same day at 3:00 p.m. in the ELC Board Room. You are not required to attend the drawing in order to be selected. The five chosen will be notified accordingly.

ICYCC 2009 INFORMATION

DATE: Tuesday, May 26 through Friday, May 29, 2009

LOCATION: Greater Fort Lauderdale Broward County Convention Center

ADDRESS: 1950 Eisenhower Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
www.ftlauderdalecc.com

PARENT/ADVOCATE ADMISSION RATE: \$150

For more information on ICYCC 2009, please visit www.icycc2009.com.

ELC Board of Directors

As seen in previous news alerts, we have featured our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on the Coalition's board of directors. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Board Director Alan Eckstein, Esq.



Alan Eckstein, Esq., graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a bachelor of science degree in psychology. He attended law school in Chicago where he practiced for 14 years representing indigent clients charged with criminal offenses and clients with civil matters. Mr. Eckstein became licensed to practice law in the state of Florida in 1990. He moved to Key West with his son and opened a general practice there with emphasis on civil and criminal litigation. In 2006, he was appointed to serve as a private-sector voting member on the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe's board of directors. He chairs the Governance and Bylaws Committee.

Mr. Eckstein has always been involved with non-profit and community organizations in Monroe County including the Key West Chamber of Commerce, Key West Business Guild (board member, 1999-2009), Hospice/VNA of the Florida Keys (board member, 1992-1999; secretary, 1998-1999), Monroe Association for ReMARCable Citizens (board member, 1994 -2000 and 2001-2005), Wesley House Family Services (board member, 1998-2005; chair, 2003-2005), District Advisory Committee 1 (DAC-1) of the Tourist Development Council (appointed in 2003 by the Monroe County Commission for a three-year term and reappointed in 2009), and the Salt Ponds Advisory Committee (chair, appointed in 2005 by the Key West City Commission).

Team Member Spotlight

This month, the spotlight shines on another valued team member and the important work she accomplishes in bringing quality early childhood education to our community. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight **Lillian Amador**, Finance Assistant.

Lillian Amador currently works as the Coalition's finance assistant but has dabbled in a number of different departments since she was first hired in September of 2006. Initially hired as a client services representative, Lillian fielded inquiries and referrals regarding the Coalition's programs, services, and administration. Never without a smile and always delivering superior customer service, Lillian quickly became a favorite of both clients and staff alike. A year later she transferred to human resources to serve as the Coalition's receptionist. Her most recent position began in September of 2008 when she became one of the finance department's diligent and capable administrative assistants.



Lillian is primarily responsible for processing, and ensuring the accuracy of, all staff and contractors' travel reimbursement. She is a designated runner to the office of Board Chairman Octavio A. Verdeja Jr.'s office when checks are in need of his signature, and serves as a back-up to Ana Rodriguez, Administrative Assistant to the Senior Director of Administration and Interim CFO. Lillian also logs all of the cash and check deposits, and provides administrative assistance to Mercy Castiglione, Controller, and to the entire finance department as needed.

A genuine superstar, Lillian has already received numerous recognitions. Among them, she received a certificate of appreciation in May of 2007 for her excellent customer service. Later that year she was honored with The Star Performer Award, an acknowledgement for which she was nominated by her fellow co-workers. Still, as humble as ever, Lillian is exceedingly grateful for both the personal and professional experience the Coalition has given her. "I have learned more administratively from my three years working at the Coalition than I have in the 11 years I worked as the front desk manager at my previous employer, an airport hotel. We had been using DOS and only just updated to Microsoft before I left! Everyone at the ELC has been so supportive, patient, and willing to help," she said.

As the busy mother of two daughters, ages 14 and nine-months-old, and two sons, ages 12 and six, Lillian enjoys spending her free time with her husband and children. Nevertheless,

if she could envision a day to herself, she admits she would love to read a good book without one single interruption.

Our Partners

Much of our success is attributed to the contributions of our valued partners. After all, they play a key role in helping us bring high-quality early care and education programs and services to our children. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight the **Hearing and Speech Center of Florida**.



Mission: To identify and serve the communicatively impaired of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. To provide professional excellence in early detection, habilitation and rehabilitation by utilizing the latest diagnosis and therapeutic techniques to maximize communication skills.

Debra Knox, Executive Director, explained that the Hearing and Speech Center of Florida (HSCF) was established in 1936 as a veteran not-for-profit agency. Today all audiologists and speech-language pathologists are American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)-certified and licensed by Florida's Department of Health. Services are offered in both English and Spanish throughout Miami-Dade County.

Approximately six to seven percent of all children who receive hearing and vision screenings are identified with concerns. A much larger percent are identified with language or speech delays. In its second year, the Coalition contracted HSCF to provide children with 3,150 hearing and vision screenings and at the request of HSCF staff, 950 speech screening follow-up activities with families and administration.

As a community partner and with the support of other grants, HSCF is able to maximize Coalition dollars by providing screenings to very young children in addition to the Coalition's target population of three- and four-year-olds. HSCF services may be expanded next fiscal year as the outcomes of these screenings have assisted many families in identifying and accessing corrective support for children.

To learn more about HSCF, visit <http://www.hearingandspeechcenter.org/>.

Miami-Dade County News Briefs

School Readiness

The Coalition is Sponsoring the Sesame Street Show, "When Elmo Grows Up" on Saturday, June 13th and Sunday, June 14th



When Elmo and his Sesame Street Live friends think about growing up, it's a musical show-and-tell! Elmo thinks about becoming a "weather monster," but has a hard time predicting his own forecast; he wants to be anything and everything all at once!

"When Elmo Grows Up" includes lessons on perseverance, teamwork and the power of imagination. Children learn that if they believe in themselves and are willing to try, the possibilities are endless.

Purchase tickets online at:

<https://www.heatlife.com/WebSell/Default1.aspx?promcode=elmomdm116>.

Show Schedule

Saturday, June 13: 10:30 a.m., 2:00 p.m. & 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 14: 1:00 p.m. & 4:30 p.m.

Seats are only \$10.75 with a \$4.00 service charge per order. For questions regarding ticket sales, please contact Basit Hasan, American Airlines Arena Group Sales Manager, at (786) 777-4386 or via e-mail at bhasan@heat.com.

Special Benefit Dance-Performance of Peter and the Wolf Featuring Artz-N-The-Hood Inc., Dancers & Momentum Dance Company

Who: Artz-N-The-Hood Inc., Dancers & Momentum Dance Company
What: Peter and the Wolf
When: Saturday, May 2, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.
Where: City of Miami Charles Hadley Park
Black Box Theatre
1350 NW 50th Street
Miami, FL 33142

For ticket information please contact:
Florene Litthcut
(305) 758-1577

Tips to Help Complete Your ASQs

Providers, we need your help! Please return your pending Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQs) as soon as possible. If you need additional or updated age protocols please call (305) 270-2905 (south of Flagler Street) or (305) 953-6007 (north of Flagler Street).

Child Development Services (CDS) is responsible for implementation of the annual screening mandate. Please support them in this important undertaking.

Tips on completing your ASQ screenings:

- Please complete each ASQ within two weeks from the day received.
- Please have parents sign the yellow consent form.
- Complete the white and pink answer sheet entirely.
- Return the package to us in a self-addressed envelope.

Children's Day at the Park!

Location

Amelia Earhart Park
401 East 65th Street
Hialeah, Florida 33013

Date & Time

Friday, May 29, 2009; 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Transportation

You are responsible for your own transportation

Cost

\$2 per student and \$2 per adult



Miscellaneous

- Snack lunches should be brought and labeled on the outside with your child's name and his or her teacher's name
- Volunteers will be on-hand to assist with parking
- CDS must be apprised of all adult chaperones

Deadline

The registration form is due by Monday, May 4, 2009; it has already been sent under separate cover.

For questions regarding the field trip, please contact:

Sara Morales

Tel: (305) 514-6201 or 514-6000

Fax: (305) 514-6226

Please make checks payable to *Miami-Dade County, Board of County Commissioners*. They should be mailed to:

Child Development Services Bureau
2525 N.W. 62nd Street, 4th Floor
Miami, Florida 33147

Undersea Adventure at the Miami Children's Museum

On Saturday, April 18, 2009, the Miami Children's Museum hosted the Undersea Adventure, a fun educational festival in partnership with the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation, The Children's Trust, VSA Arts of Florida, and Arts for Learning.



The Coalition's Gabriel Carreras and Kerry Allen (pictured at left) volunteered their time to promote the Coalition as a beneficial resource to parents seeking early care and education programs and services. They provided parents with information about VPK registration and how to choose quality child care.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates

VPK Standards Training for May 2009

2008 VPK Education Standards**

Reference #168

Thursday, May 7, 2009; 5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

MDC Homestead Campus, Room G103

500 College Terrace

What's New in VPK*

Reference #170

Thursday, May 21, 2009; 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

MDC Homestead Campus Room G103

500 College Terrace

All classes are taught in English and begin promptly at 5:00 p.m. Arrivals after 5:15 p.m. will not be allowed into the training. To register, visit <http://www.myflorida.com/childcare/> and select 'Training Requirements.'

*What's New in VPK is for VPK teachers and directors who have a 2005 VPK Standards book and a 2005 VPK Education Standards Certificate of Completion.

**2008 VPK Education Standards is for VPK teachers and directors who have never taken VPK Standards training.

KidVision VPK: A Free and Innovative Online Resource for VPK Educators and 4-Year-Olds

KidVision VPK has teamed up with the Coalition to ensure VPK teachers in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties are offered innovative tools that adhere to Florida VPK Education Standards. Developed by WPBT2, KidVision VPK delivers a free, online resource for VPK teachers and four-year-olds at www.kidvisionvpk.org.



This e-learning environment provides free professional development CEUs for VPK educators, as well as virtual field trips that take students and teachers to a railroad museum, fire station, and recycling center among other locations. Each module is a unique adventure where children watch, learn, play, and integrate the VPK Standards in their daily lives resulting in increased achievement on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS).

VPK Registration Information for the 2009-2010 School Year

Children must be 4-years-old by September 1, 2009 to enroll in the VPK 2009-2010 School Year program.

Registration Sites

Miami Gardens Neighborhood Service Center
16405 NW 25th Avenue
Miami Gardens, FL 33054

Frankie Shannon Rolle Neighborhood Service Center
3750 South Dixie Highway
Miami, FL 33133

Naranja Neighborhood Service Center
13955 SW 264th Street
Miami, FL 33032

Dates and Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday (Starting May 18, 2009 throughout the school year)
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Saturdays: May 16; June 13, 20; August 1, 8, and 15, 2009
9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

*Please be mindful that the VPK registration process is continued throughout the year during regular hours.

Note--Services are rendered on a first-come, first-served basis. Numbers will be distributed to the maximum number of parents that can be seen in the scheduled time allotted. Once these numbers are used up, the line will close. For more information, please call (305) 373-3521.

Monroe County News Briefs

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates

Registration for 2009-2010 VPK School-Year Program

Ongoing registration will be conducted at all Wesley House locations beginning Monday, May 4, 2009 as follows:

Key West: 1304 Truman Avenue; Monday - Friday; 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Marathon: 2796 Overseas Highway, Suite 202; Tuesday and Thursday; 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Tavernier: 175 Wrenn Street; Monday - Friday; 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Any parents interested in signing up their child for VPK are encouraged to register early. Enrollment is based on class-size limits and space availability.

Provider Applications for 2009-2010 VPK School-Year Program

Application packets have been mailed to returning VPK providers. Completed applications with required supporting documentation should be returned by Friday, May 1, 2009. The VPK provider agreement cannot be signed until this process is complete. For questions, please contact Mary Williams at (305) 296-5557.