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## President's Message



I am pleased to announce our partnership with EPIC Hotel ([www.epichotel.com](http://www.epichotel.com)), one of Miami's premiere waterfront luxury boutique hotels; Hachette Book Group; and Sony Digital to launch the EPIC Page Turner program, a complimentary reading service for EPIC Hotel's guests.

Promoting the importance and fun of reading to our young children, and providing them with literacy resources, are just a couple of examples of how the Coalition works collaboratively to enhance early childhood education in our community. EPIC Hotel has joined us in this effort by donating their guests' Sony Digital Reader eBook download-fees to the Coalition.

Additionally, as part of the Friday, August 28th *B as in Beauty* reading-event featuring author Alberto Ferreras, EPIC Hotel has agreed to make a donation to the Early Learning Coalition for every *B as in Beauty* reservation that is made for the nights of Thursday, August 27th through Sunday, August 30th. The special rate starts at \$129/night plus tax for a Cityview room. One weekend getaway before the school-year moves into full-swing will help the Coalition continue its critical advocacy efforts on behalf of child literacy. Call 305-424-5226 to make your reservation and request the EPICB package.

If you know of anyone visiting the Miami area, I encourage you to recommend EPIC Hotel's ample amenities and our unique partnership with them. With the hotel's support, we will continue to promote the importance of child literacy to our community and prepare our children for a successful future in school and in life.

As always, I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres  
President & CEO  
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

## Important Announcements

[The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is now on Facebook and Twitter!](#)



Click here to follow us on Twitter.

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary 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

For a complete list of upcoming Coalition meetings and events, please visit our website at [www.elcndm.org](http://www.elcndm.org).



Click here to become a fan on Facebook.

For continuous updates on all of the ELC's latest news and events, join now!

## \$1.8 Million Awarded to the Early Learning Coalition to Enhance Employee Benefits of Local Businesses and Stimulate Local Economy

The Early Learning Coalition has been awarded a \$1.8 million grant by the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program board. The CCEP board is a public/private partnership created to help local businesses improve employee benefits by offering parents access to reliable, discounted early care and education settings for their children while they work.

"At the Early Learning Coalition, we take pride and work hard to continuously find ways to provide a high-quality early education to children. This grant also gives us an opportunity to stimulate the local economy and support early care and education providers," says Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. "We received this grant because of the success of our program in the previous year."

With these new resources, the Coalition will now be able to serve 900 additional children. This program enables business owners to offer the benefit of early child care and education for their qualifying employees while helping to improve employee productivity and reduce absenteeism. According to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, the lack of available child care costs US businesses over \$3 billion annually in employee absences.

"Employers understand the challenges their employees face in caring for a family and managing a career. Employers also understand that when their staff are late or take time off from work because of child care issues, their company's bottom line can be affected," says Evelio C. Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. "The CCEP Program is a great solution for both," added Torres.

Whether working parents in South Florida have lost their jobs or are cutting expenses in anticipation of a job layoff or salary cut, they are facing tough challenges when it comes to affording child care. The CCEP program allows working parents to focus their attention on other crucial expenses like rent/mortgage, food or car payments, while ensuring their children have high-quality early education at a reduced cost.

Funding for the CCEP program is provided through federal and state sources and is available to businesses throughout Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. These dollars are matched with funding from local governments, businesses and charitable foundations on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Local businesses may receive potential tax benefits, attract and retain better

Program & Strategy  
August 26 at 1:00  
p.m.  
ELC Board Room

Finance  
August 31 at 8:00  
a.m.  
ELC Board Room

Board of Directors  
Retreat  
September 8 at 9:00  
a.m.  
Key Largo Hilton

Program & Strategy  
and Provider  
Services  
September 9 at 1:00  
p.m.  
ELC Monroe Office



employees, reduce absenteeism and tardiness, improve morale in the workplace, and cultivate a stronger work ethic as employees are comforted by the knowledge that their children are being cared for and educated in a stable and safe environment.

For more information on the CCEP program for your business, contact Alina Soto at 305-646-7220.

### Court Upholds Ruling in Favor of Duval County ELC QRIS

Susan Main, Executive Director of the Duval County Early Learning Coalition announced on June 23, 2009 that the coalition won its appeal on the Florida Association for Child Care Management (FACCM) vs. Duval County ELC Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) litigation. This was an important ruling for communities making investments in high-quality early learning programs and for the parents and children of Florida.

### RIF's Book A Brighter Future: Pay Only \$3 for a \$10-off-Coupon

Let's go shopping and make a difference! Stop by Macy's and pay only \$3 for a \$10-off-coupon on your next in-store purchase of \$50 or more. Macy's will donate 100% of every \$3 to Reading Is Fundamental's (RIF) Book A Brighter Future™



[www.bookabrighterfuture.com/BABF2009](http://www.bookabrighterfuture.com/BABF2009) for America's children.

This fantastic opportunity to promote children's literacy only lasts through August 31st so please visit your local Macy's department store now! Click on the underlined link above for additional details and resources.

### AWI Has Published the 2009 Market Rate for Early Care and Education Providers

The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) has released the 2009 Market Rate for early care and education providers ([http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/oel\\_coalitions.html](http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/oel_coalitions.html)). Currently the report is separated into three PDF files. They can be viewed on our website at <http://elcmdm.org/downloads/awiMARKETRATERPT09.pdf>. AWI is working to condense these three individual pages into one comprehensive report.

### The Business of Family Child Care - A Webinar Series

The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) is offering a seven-part live webinar series, The Business of Family Child Care. The webinar will cover the

business topics of record keeping basics, advanced record keeping and taxes, contracts, marketing, legal/insurance, and business planning and money management. The series will provide family child care providers with the knowledge and tools to be successful!

For more information and to access the link to register, please visit the "Updates and News" section on our homepage at [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org).

### Parents, Avoid Tragedy By Having Your Provider Call You If Your Child Does Not Show Up at Early Care!

To learn more about how to prevent toddlers from passing away as a result of heat stroke in motor vehicles, please visit <http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2009/aug/16/anara-guard-research-shows-day-care-providers-do/>.

### Seminar for Afterschool Providers on The Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs

The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) is pleased to announce it has received sponsorship from AWI's Office of Early Learning to host 15 regional seminars throughout Florida featuring The Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs.

**WHO:** Afterschool providers from all venues, serving children grades K-5

**WHAT:** Participants will receive a print copy of *The Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs* and will be introduced to all seven categories and 45 elements

**WHEN:** Saturday, October 24, 2009; 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Trinity Church  
17801 NW 2nd Ave.  
Miami, FL 33169

Registration is FREE to all afterschool providers who register through FAN's website at [www.myfan.org](http://www.myfan.org) or by submitting the registration flyer available for download at <http://www.elcmdm.org/events/trainings/MiamiRegForm.pdf>.

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## 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 David Lawrence Jr.



David Lawrence Jr. retired in 1999 as publisher of The Miami Herald to work in the area of early childhood development and readiness. He is president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and "University Scholar for Early Childhood Development and Readiness" at the University of Florida. Gov. Charlie Crist named him to the Children's Cabinet in 2007. In 2002 he led the campaign for The Children's Trust, a dedicated source of early intervention and prevention funding for children in Miami-Dade - with an 85 percent reaffirmation from the voters in 2008. He is the "founding chair." Named by Gov. Jeb Bush to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, he chaired that oversight board twice. He serves on the board of the Foundation for Child Development in New York and the Executive Advisory Board for the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In 2002-3 he chaired the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Protection. In 2002, he was a key figure in passing a statewide constitutional amendment to provide pre-K for all 4 year olds. He is a board member and former chair of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe. The David Lawrence Jr. K-8 Public School opened in 2006 across from the north campus of Florida International University. A fully endowed chair in early childhood studies is established in his name at the University of Florida College of Education.

Before coming to Miami in 1989, he was publisher and executive editor of the Detroit Free Press. Previously he was editor of the Charlotte Observer, and earlier in reporting and editing positions at four newspapers. (During his tenure as Miami Herald publisher, the paper won five Pulitzer Prizes.)

He is a graduate of the University of Florida and named "Outstanding Journalism Graduate" and subsequently from the Advanced Management program at the Harvard Business School. In 1988, he was honored with Knight-Ridder's top award, the John S. Knight Gold Medal. His 12 honorary doctorates include one from his alma mater, the University of Florida. His national honors include the Ida B. Wells Award "for exemplary leadership in providing minorities employment opportunities" and the National Association of Minority Media Executives award for "lifetime achievement in diversity." His writing awards include the First Amendment Award from the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Inter American Press Association Commentary Award. He chaired the national Task Force on Minorities in the Newspaper Business, was the 1991-92 president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the 1995-96 president of the Inter American Press Association.

His board activity: The Miami Art Museum, United Way and the New World School of the Arts (each formerly as chair), and the University of Florida Foundation. As a member of the Governor's Commission on Education, he chaired the Readiness Committee. He was the local convening co-chair of the 1994 Summit of the Americas. And he co-founded a non-profit vocational-technical school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He chairs the University of Florida Regional Council.

He and Roberta, a master's graduate in social work from Barry, live in Coral Gables and have 3 daughters, 2 sons and 4 grandchildren. His honors include: "Family of the Year" from Family Counseling Services, "Father of the Year" by the South Florida Father's Day Council and the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Advocacy Award. This year he has been honored with "Humanitarian of the Year" awards from both the American Red Cross and the Beacon Council as well as with the Henry M. Flagler Award for Visionary Leadership from the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. Nationally, he has been honored with the American Public Health Association Award of Excellence, the Lewis Hine Award for Children and Youth and the "Children's Champion" award from the National Black Child Development Institute.

## Governor Crist Re-appoints Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., to Chair the Early Learning Coalition

Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., of Coral Gables, and managing partner of Verdeja & De Armas, LLP, was reappointed by Governor Charlie Crist to serve a second term on the board of directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. His new term began on June 19, 2009, and will end April 30, 2013. Mr. Verdeja will continue to serve as the Coalition's chair.

Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., CPA, has 30 years of experience in public accounting and has specialized in the not-for-profit and school industries with clients that include local museums, art centers and children's organizations. A graduate of the University of Miami in 1979, Mr. Verdeja became one of the youngest licensed CPAs in the state of Florida. He is now a leader in performing audits of schools in Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties, as well as being actively involved in the real estate development industry.

Early on in his career, Mr. Verdeja committed himself to sharing his time and talents with his community. He is a member of the University of Miami Citizens Board and past-treasurer of the University of Miami's Cuban Collection. In 2005, Mr. Verdeja was appointed by Governor Jeb Bush to chair the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. In this capacity, Mr. Verdeja leads a board of community leaders in the oversight of early education programs for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. Together these programs serve over 50,000 children annually with the organization's budget of over \$180 million.

"The Coalition, our community and our board are very fortunate to have Mr. Verdeja in the role of chairman for another term. His leadership, generous contribution of time, and his family's tradition of giving back to the community have made, and will continue to make, a long lasting difference," says Evelio C. Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

As a tireless education advocate, Mr. Verdeja's professional expertise as a CPA and auditor, and his skills as a business executive and leader, have helped advance the largest, and most demographically diverse early learning coalition in the state to become one of the most successful. In turn, the young children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties are entering school better prepared to learn and succeed than ever before.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to navigate the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe through the unique challenges and rewards of the past four years. On behalf of the young children of our community, I am humbled to be given the opportunity to continue to lead the organization for the next four years," says Octavio A. Verdeja Jr., Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

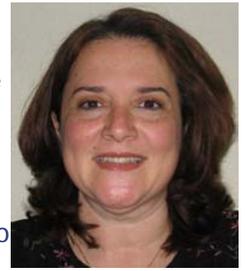
Mr. Verdeja remains optimistic as he prepares the Early Learning Coalition for the future. His primary goals are to strongly advocate for additional funding to support early education programs, to improve the quality of care and education that children receive, and to advocate for state policy changes that will positively affect and create better opportunities for all children. "Our Coalition is well poised to continue showing the return on investment of an early education. Every child in our state deserves an opportunity to participate in a high-quality early education program," he says. "We know that by providing our youngest and most vulnerable citizens with high-quality early care and education, we are giving them the tools and resources they need to succeed in school and in life."

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## 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 **Ana Rodriguez**, Administrative Assistant to the Senior Director of Administration and Finance.

Ana Rodriguez has been working at the Coalition for the past two and a half years as the administrative assistant to the senior director of administration and finance. She has 20 years of professional experience in the field of human resources, three of which were spent at Kids Hope United.



Working closely with the Coalition's executive leadership has been rewarding for Ana as she's seen the efforts of the past two years come to successful fruition firsthand. Moreover, she is proud to work for an organization that actively advocates high-quality education for children. "Children see everything colorful and bright, they accept you for who you are, they always find something good in you, and for us to be able to return a little something of what they give to us--that's a good feeling," Ana says.

## 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 Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA).



Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) provides high-quality early care and education to children of migrant families and rural, low-income families in Florida.

RCMA was founded on October 1, 1965, by Mennonite Church volunteers in the Redlands farming area of southern Miami-Dade County to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children while their parents worked in the fields.

From three centers with approximately 75 children in the Homestead and Florida City area, RCMA now serves nearly 8,000 children in over 75 centers, including two charter schools, in 21 Florida counties.

The largest non-profit child-care provider in Florida, RCMA is a leader in high-quality early childhood services; more than half of RCMA's child-care centers are nationally accredited.

A non-sectarian association, RCMA is built on principles of incorporating the family into child development, healthcare and educational activities and hiring and training staff from the communities served.

The RCMA helps serve School Readiness children, and participates in the Coalition's five-star-quality rating system, Quality Counts.

For more information on RCMA, please visit <http://www.rcma.org/index.asp>.

## Miami-Dade County News Briefs

## *School Readiness*

### Early Discovery Program: Intervention Services for Young Children



Funded by The Children's Trust, the Early Discovery program provides therapy for children ages birth to five-years-old who exhibit signs of developmental delays, and have sought assistance from Early Steps or FDLRS but were found ineligible for services.

For additional information, please contact the Early Discovery Service Partnership at [JBarth@med.miami.edu](mailto:JBarth@med.miami.edu) or at 305-243-4617.

## *Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates*

### How to Register for VPK Trainings

Please visit our VPK website at <http://www.vpkhelp.org/resources/trainings.html> to learn the 13 steps to successfully register for VPK trainings. Courses include VPK Educational Standards, Integrating the Standards, and Emergent Literacy for the VPK Classroom. Instructions on how to cancel your registration or obtain your certificate, transcript, and/or CEUs are also available.

## Monroe County

### Monroe Coalition Office Move

The Coalition's Monroe office has moved to the County's Gato Building. Their new mailing address is:



Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe  
1100 Simonton St., Suite 1-204  
Key West, FL 33040

Please Note: The main office phone number and fax number has *not* changed.

## Quality Counts

The goal of Quality Counts (QC), Miami-Dade County's voluntary quality-rating-improvement system, is to provide all children with the tools they need to become successful in school and in life. QC provides support to providers as they work to meet their goal of improving quality in the areas that affect young learners most: the learning environment, ratio of staff to child, professional development of teachers, parent involvement, and program administration.

QC reinforces the concept of parent choice, giving parents the necessary information to

choose which early education program is the best fit for their child. Moreover, the program actively engages the entire child care community consisting of subsidized and non-subsidized early care and education programs, private and faith-based child care providers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, Miami- Dade County Public Schools, and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA).

Those involved in the facilitation of QC have held many focus groups to find out what participants are thinking and how to improve processes and practices. Quality Counts strongly values the input of the provider community; their assistance and feedback continue to enhance the program and make it thrive. As a result, many programs have already engaged in a year of continuous quality improvement and are ready to receive a Star rating.

As QC moves into its third year, Pam Hollingsworth, Director of Quality Counts, welcomes your feedback at [phollingsworth@elcmdm.org](mailto:phollingsworth@elcmdm.org), and looks forward to continued collaboration with partners, The Children's Trust, The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami; parents; and early care and education providers and professionals.