Office of
Early Learning
Learn Early. Learn for Life

March 2018

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March 2018
Early Learning Parents' Pages

- Family-Friendly Places to Learn: Libraries and Museums
- It's National Nutrition and Read-Aloud Months
- Read to Babies
- Earned Income Tax Credit

Click to read the March issue.

Children's book author makes special visit to early learning center

Special visit part of the Rotary Read Aloud initiative

Local children's book author Carol "Boots" Hensel visited PCB Academy in Panama City, Fla., during a special visit on Wednesday, Feb. 21. Boots read her story *Johari's Joy* to children while dressed in pig pajamas, and there were guest appearances from her book's stars, Johari and Joy.

The special visit took place thanks to the Rotary Read Aloud program, an initiative between the **Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida** and the Rotary Club of Panama City. The program started in 2007, and has grown from a partnership with four school readiness contracted providers to 22. Each month, rotarians visit participating Rotary Read Aloud sites in Bay County to read to children. Books and puppets are left with teachers as a gift to the program. Additionally, books are donated through the generous funding of the Rotary Club of Panama City to encourage reading and family engagement in the home. Parents complete

pre- and post-Home Literacy Environment Checklists to monitor changes in behavior from the beginning to the end of the program. Parents and teachers also complete comment cards on books provided by the coalition. Books are selected based on the "Mind in the Making" series of activity sheets with tips to promote life skills.
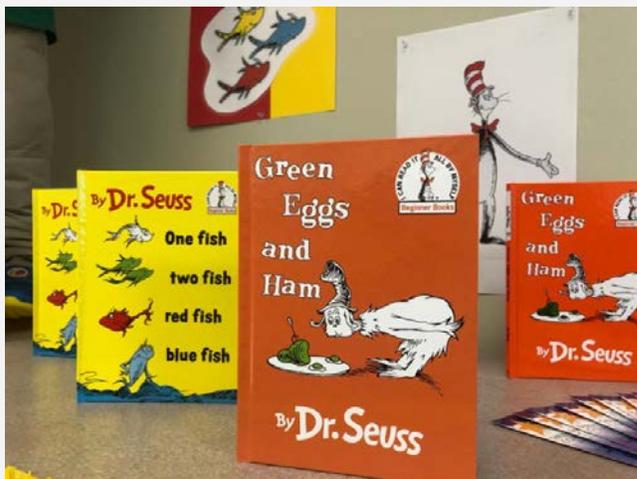
During the 2016/2017 school year, rotarians spent over 56 hours preparing for and/or reading in school-readiness-contracted programs. Based on feedback data from parents and teachers, parents have become more engaged and have increased the time spent reading to their children. Parents are visiting the library more and are adding books to their home library. Screen time for children has also decreased for children involved with Rotary Read Aloud.

Click here to read more.

Coalition celebrates Read Across America Day

ELC of SWFL celebrates with free books, encourages adults to volunteer

The **ELC of Southwest Florida** celebrated Read Across America Day, which is also Dr. Seuss's birthday, by decorating their lobbies in Fort Myers and Naples.

Children of families who visited the coalition offices between Feb. 29 through Mar. 2 received hardback copies of popular Dr. Seuss books *Green Eggs and Ham* and O*ne Fish, Two Fish*. The coalition also encouraged adults to join its Literacy Buddy Program, which pairs adult volunteers with a preschooler to help encourage reading and writing.

ELC of Hillsborough board names Gordon Gillette as its new CEO

Gillette will begin his role as CEO this month
The **ELC of Hillsborough County** announced that its board of directors has selected Gordon L. Gillette as its next chief executive officer. Gillette assumed the role of CEO of the coalition on Mar. 12, 2018.

"After a comprehensive and deliberate 4-month search process facilitated by a top local search firm, the [coalition] board of directors is delighted that Gordon Gillette will lead the [coalition] as we continue growth and collaboration with other key agencies in this important part of our educational system," said Aakash Patel, chair of the board of directors. "Our board selected Gordon as our top choice because we believe in his passion for education. He's been a successful leader in the Tampa Bay business community, and we were truly impressed with his vision for our organization. We believe hiring Gordon is truly a game changer for our organization."

Gillette joins the coalition after a 36-year career with TECO Energy, where he retired on Nov. 30, 2017, as the CEO of Tampa Electric Company and president of Florida Operations.

Gillette expressed his eagerness to begin his new position, stating he is "honored and excited to lead the ELC of Hillsborough County as the next chapter in my professional life. I look forward to working with the teams at the coalition and the many other important organizations in our county involved in early learning to help families and continuously improve the school preparedness of all the children of our county."

Click here to read more.

Touch-a-Truck event will benefit coalition

Children can get up close and personal with trucks at interactive event
The annual Touch-a-Truck event, which benefits the **ELC of the Emerald Coast** is an interactive event that allows children the opportunity to climb on, learn about and discover their favorite big trucks and vehicles. Drivers and operators will be on hand to educate the public and answer any questions.
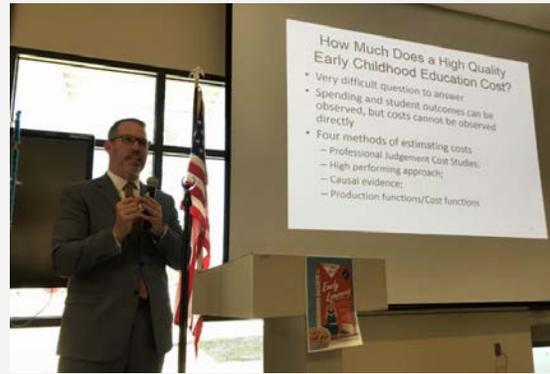
The event will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Apr. 7 at the Martin County Fairgrounds in Stuart, Fla. Trucks currently confirmed to be on-site include construction, police and military vehicles. Admission is $5 per person, children age 2 and under are free.

Click here for more information.

Coalition hosts Early Learning Breakfast for Business Champions

ELC of Sarasota sponsors breakfast event to to recognize efforts toward making child care more accessible
Larry Miller, the dean of education at Florida Southwestern State College, addressed a crowd of nearly 80 business leaders and children's advocates Tuesday, Mar. 6 in Sarasota at the Early Learning Breakfast for Business Champions sponsored by the **ELC of Sarasota**.

The event celebrated business leaders who were striving to make child care more accessible and affordable for employees. But the morning mostly focused on educating attendees on two main ideas: Kids entering kindergarten without some sort of preschool are at a fundamental disadvantage, and early education is expensive.

After the breakfast, Miller sat with a group of child care providers, agency leaders and representatives from various foundations and nonprofits to discuss how to address funding shortfalls.

The breakfast also honored three businesses that have expanded access to child care for their employees. Pines of Sarasota Rehabilitation and Senior Care Community, Sarasota Memorial Hospital and PGT Innovations all received recognition for making high quality child care more accessible to their employees.

Click here to read more.

Coalition to pilot a new PBS Kids workshop

ELC of the Big Bend Region invites providers for a professional development workshop
The **ELC of the Big Bend Region** will pilot a PBS Kids workshop titled "WFSU Playful Learning for Educators" on Thursday, Mar. 22 from 6-8 p.m. at the WFSU Public Media Station in Tallahassee, Fla.

The workshop will lay a foundation for creating playful learning environments that integrate media content to help support learning objectives.

Click here to register.