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N-E-W-S

Early learning highlights from North, East, West and South Florida

Coalition spreads the love of literacy in Sarasota

From Cat A to Cat Z, together we spread the love of literacy!

In celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday, Sarasota's littlest learners experienced the unexpected as they "diffendoofered" their way through Seussville. On Friday, Mar. 1, the **Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County** teamed up with members from the Pi Beta Phi Sarasota-Manatee Alumnae Group to read to the VPK classes at four area preschools. Children at St. Wilfred's Preschool, Kinderhouse Preschool, Bright Beginnings Preschool and Little Geniuses enjoyed listening to stories from Dr. Seuss.



Oh, the images that must have swirled in their little heads as they listened to the famed author's wacky words, wit and wonder. One reader also got into true Seussian spirit by bringing props including a tall hat full of bean bag toy cats. After the reading, the coalition gave each participating child a Dr. Seuss book to take home.

Where is the Cat in the Hat?



During March, somewhere loose in northern Florida. To celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday, Mar.2, the **ELC of North Florida** held a drawing at its January early educators' conference where child care centers and preschools could receive a Dr. Seuss program in their school. Put on by ELC staff and volunteers, the program includes story time with special guest "The Cat in the Hat" followed by activities relating to Dr. Seuss books. Each child received a copy of the book *Ten Apples Up on Top*. Teachers received a resource bag filled with a set of eight Dr. Seuss books and other related teaching materials.

Winners included A Child's Castle in Palatka, Orange Park Methodist Preschool, First Class Learning Center in Orange Park, Brighton Day Academy and Memorial Lutheran Preschool in St. Augustine. "Promoting early literacy is a priority mission for us at the coalition" says literacy outreach manager Joan Whitson, "Getting children excited about books and making sure that all children have them can make all the difference in their success in school all during their lives."

Coalition prepares for week urging children to read Manatee ELC wins grants that make week possible.

The **Manatee County ELC** in partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Bradenton is getting ready for "Every Child a Reader Week." An annual event that promotes early literacy in Manatee County and provides an opportunity for community volunteers to read a storybook to preschool children, the event will take place the week of Apr. 22-26. Kiwanis awarded the coalition a \$6,000 grant toward purchasing books and materials and will provide volunteer readers for the 2019 event. Michael Saunders & Company Foundation awarded the coalition a \$1,000 grant for the program.



During the week, community volunteers visit classrooms of 3- to 5-year-old children in an early learning facility and read a book to the children. The volunteer then gives each child his or her own book to read with their families. Children also receive a tip sheet for their parents that offers ideas to help parents encourage reading. The volunteer's book stays in the classroom so the teacher can continue the momentum the event builds.

Coalition staff tout VPK's benefits in Spanish.

Staff members who speak Spanish from the [ELC of Duval](#) went on *Facebook Live* recently to spread the word about VPK.



"Desde Mi Balcon by Fernando Santiago" conducted the interview in Spanish to inform the Hispanic community regarding the VPK program. The interview took place in the coalition lobby on Mar. 6. Santiago introduced the coalition and interviewed Rosa Fucci. After the interview, the Facebook audience asked questions.

Spring will spring next week.

To find out what is happening in Duval County, read [ELC of Duval's](#) spring issue of [In the Loop](#).

Children have breakfast with favorite characters

The [ELC of North Florida](#) partnered with the Kiwanis Club of St. Augustine to host its second annual Character Breakfast on Saturday, Feb. 9, in St. Augustine. A fundraiser for the Kiwanis Club, it is also a successful community event. Of the 289 tickets sold, more than 90 were given to ELC school readiness families. There were 16 different characters present including Cinderella, Batman, Spiderman, Winnie the Pooh, Dora the Explorer and the Cat in the Hat.



The event featured four activity zones that included a Dr. Seuss town, Cinderella's Parlor, Super Hero Corner and a Dinosaur Dig zone. Kids were able to fish for books and there were various photo opportunities. The children came dressed as their favorite character and are excited to see their heroes.

Coalition board members take "serving" seriously.



[ELC of Southwest Florida](#) board members took their commitment to serve to heart recently, serving lunch to early learning coalition staff. Late last year they approved higher rates for school readiness providers, which took effect Jan. 1. The coalition also welcomed three new board members. Interested in more news from the Southwest Florida coalition? You are invited to sign up for the newsletter on their [website](#).

Palm Beach ELC invites conference presenters and attendees



The ELC of Palm Beach County will host its 2nd Annual Early Childhood Educators Conference: Ready, Set, Learn! Saturday, May 11, at Palm Beach State College's Lake Worth campus. They are inviting other coalitions to participate and submit presentation proposals. The deadline is 11:59 pm Friday, Mar. 22. They are also inviting sponsorships and/or participation as table vendors. Information about proposals and sponsorships is available [here](#).

Contact: Communications, Office of Early Learning
250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399
866 357 3239

