

## MEDIA CONTACT

Su Byron Enterprises

941-726-8468

Su@SuByronEnterprises.com

### **The Florida Center for Early Childhood Receives Grant from the Wawa Foundation**

*The \$2,000 grant will support upgrading sensory and activity equipment for indoor play at Starfish Academy campuses in Sarasota and North Port.*

(February 22, 2024) The Florida Center for Early Childhood Education announces the receipt of a \$2,000 grant from the Wawa Foundation. This funding will bolster an initiative dedicated to revitalizing and modernizing sensory and activity equipment for indoor play at Starfish Academy campuses located in Sarasota and North Port.

Kimberly Treharne, the chief programs officer at The Florida Center, clarifies that the grant will be allocated within a \$50,000 budget aimed at acquiring new sensory kits and equipment tailored for infants and toddlers. "The grant will facilitate enhancements in the classroom and therapy areas across our Sarasota and North Port campuses," she says. "The program enables us to replace worn-out, obsolete equipment with cohesive, meticulously designed spaces and sensory tools that foster experiential learning, mental well-being, and wholesome development."

Treharne emphasizes that this grant is pivotal in ensuring that "all children have access to enriching environments for learning and development. Yet, children facing significant challenges often require specialized settings and tools. Investing in early intervention services empowers children to overcome obstacles that might impede their

progress. This aligns with our vision of vibrant communities, where no child is left behind due to circumstances beyond their control.”

CEO Dr. Kristie Skoglund says: “By addressing children's needs early on, we cultivate a compassionate, inclusive community where everyone can thrive and achieve their utmost potential. We are deeply grateful to the Wawa Foundation for its generous support of this critical initiative.”

**Photo captions:**

- *Young students play on the jungle gym at The Florida Center for Early Childhood Education’s Starfish Academy in Sarasota.*
- *Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten students experimenting with chemistry at The Florida Center for Early Childhood Education’s Starfish Academy in Sarasota.*
- *Children in a 3- to 4-year-old class explore gardening techniques in the sensory garden at The Florida Center for Early Childhood Education’s Starfish Academy in Sarasota.*

**The WaWa Foundation:**

**Our Story:** From the very start, when Grahame Wood opened the first Wawa store in 1964, he had a vision for a new kind of place that not only served customers but gave back to its community. The company began finding ways Wawa could help the community that were extensions of what Wawa did naturally—helping care for neighbors, providing nutritious food and always being reliable and accessible.

In 2014, on Wawa’s 50th anniversary, that same legacy of giving was formalized and amplified with the establishment of The Wawa Foundation. Today, with the support of hundreds of partners and millions of customers and associates, Grahame’s initial commitment to building stronger communities continues across the same three areas that reflect Wawa’s history and purpose—**championing life-saving research and care for people in need, leading hunger-relief efforts and supporting the heroes making a difference every day.**

**Purpose:** The Wawa Foundation is committed to Building Strong Communities

### **About The Florida Center for Early Childhood**

For more than 40 years, The Florida Center for Early Childhood has been the leading provider of therapeutic services, early education, and healthy development for young children in southwest Florida, offering a seamless delivery of services for the whole child and their family. Today, the agency is nationally recognized for its early childhood expertise in various specialties. The Florida Center provides developmental therapies, mental health counseling, Starfish Academy preschool, the Healthy Families home-visiting program, and the state's only Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Clinic, with locations in Sarasota and Orlando. **For more information, visit [TheFloridaCenter.org](http://TheFloridaCenter.org).**