

MEDIA CONTACT

Su Byron Enterprises

941-726-8468

Su@SuByronEnterprises.com

The Florida Center for Early Childhood's Receives a Grant from the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation

The \$10,000 grant will contribute to the purchase of furnishings for two Starfish Academy classrooms on the Sarasota and North Port campuses.

(February 5, 2024) Studies show that strategic renovations to young children's learning environments significantly enhance their cognitive development and engagement. By replacing dilapidated, piecemeal furnishings with sturdy, wooden furniture, warm lighting, and natural accessories, young students gain an environment that is calming and conducive to exploration, self-discovery, and learning. This style of classroom setting, inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which emphasizes child-centered and experiential learning, is especially effective for children with needs related to diagnoses such as autism, sensory processing disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs, and others.

A \$10,000 grant from the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation brings The Florida Center for Early Childhood Education closer to the total cost of just over \$50,000 needed to purchase furnishings for two Starfish Academy classrooms (for two- and three-years olds) on its Sarasota and North Port campuses. Starfish Academy is The Florida Center's nationally accredited early childhood education program, serving children aged six weeks to five years with a wide array of onsite speech/language, occupational therapy, and mental health services.

“This grant allows us to move ahead with improvements for our two Starfish Academy locations,” says CEO Dr. Kristie Skoglund. “This investment not only fosters a positive learning atmosphere but also underscores the importance of prioritizing the educational needs of children at risk, ensuring they have the tools for academic success.”

Skoglund adds that she and her team are “very grateful to the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation for its support of this initiative. They share our mission to build a community that values and invests in the wellbeing and development of young children and their families.”

Photo captions:

- Image #1: *Free play in the 3 to 4-year-old class at Starfish Academy in North Port.*

Image #2: *Circle time in the voluntary Pre-Kindergarten class at Starfish Academy in Sarasota.*

Image #3: *Occupational therapy session in a therapy room at Starfish Academy in North Port.*

About the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation

The mission of the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation is to promote the education, health and emotional well-being of children in our communities. Suncoast Credit Union is proud to have founded the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established to benefit sick children and their families and to support educational initiatives. The foundation is a vehicle for Suncoast to support the communities we serve and help the people who live here. Since its inception in 1990, the Foundation has raised and donated over \$40 million to help provide a better future for the children of our community. **Visit suncoastcreditunion.com/community/suncoast-foundation.**

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.**