



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMUNITY LEADER GIFTS \$55K FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER PLAYGROUND

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., April 4, 2024 - Episcopal Children's Services will dedicate the playground at Howard Academy, 306 NW 7th Ave, Bldg. 3, Ocala, FL 34475, on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 10 a.m. in honor of philanthropists Stan and Martha Hanson and in memory of their son, Adam.

In March 2023, the Hansons made a generous gift of \$55,000 to fund new playground equipment at the ECS Howard Head Start/Early Head Start Center. Stan Hanson shared, "We try to do things which Adam would look down and say, 'I love this.'" Adam Hanson passed away in a motorcycle accident in 2006. The playground, which will be named in loving memory of Adam Hanson, opened in January of this year and serves 59 children who attend the center each day.

This is not the first ECS playground the Hansons have underwritten. After the Hansons attended a tour of ECS facilities in 2019, they inquired about projects needing priority attention and the details of a playground renovation at the Thelma Griffin Center Early Head Start Center in northeast Ocala were discussed. "Many people don't realize the importance of "playtime" in a child's development. Having modern playgrounds and equipment is a big plus to foster that development," Stan stated. In response to the need, the Hansons donated \$50k to the center to help with the renovations. That playground was installed in April 2020 and serves 80 children.

"We are so grateful for Stan and Martha's continued support of Episcopal Children's Services," said Chief Development Officer Lauren Weedon Hopkins. "They understand the importance of children learning through play and are true champions of our mission."

The Hansons are pillars of the Marion County community, serving on several boards and commissions for many years. Most recently, Stan served as the Chairman of Marion County's Parks and Recreation Advisory Council and Vice Chairman of the county's Parks and Environmental Lands Acquisition Advisory Council. Martha Hanson chairs the Adam Hanson Better Communities Fund supporting education and community parks among other initiatives. "My wife Martha and I were introduced to the many services ECS provides in developing early learning skills of preschoolers. Our first opportunity to contribute to the work of ECS was a project to renovate the playground at the ECS Thelma Griffith Center," commented Stan. Their passion for recreation, education, children, and literacy are what makes this an important partnership for years to come.

About Episcopal Children's Services

Offering early childhood education and holistic family services, Episcopal Children's Services provides School Readiness, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs to more than 27,000 children and their families in 14 counties in Florida, including Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Lake, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties.

ECS uses research and best practices to help families ensure their children enter school ready to learn. Talented, dedicated teachers and staff work proactively with children from birth to age five and their families to build a strong educational foundation.

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