

Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast Celebrates Early Literacy and Community Connection at Storybook Village

FORT WALTON BEACH, FL – The Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast (ELC–EC) recently brought over 2,000 attendees as well as 11 local childcare providers and Okaloosa County School District together for its annual Storybook Village event on October 24 in Fort Walton Beach. This year's theme, "Down on the Farm: Moo-ving Minds," transformed the celebration into a day of farm-inspired fun, early literacy activities and meaningful community connections.

Held in partnership with United Fidelity Bank as part of its Community Day celebration, Storybook Village provided families with a free opportunity to explore early learning through interactive activities and connect with local organizations dedicated to supporting children and families. "It truly is a labor of love, but the combined UFB and ELC team does so much to engage in our hometown community throughout the year. It was amazing to see how the community responded by the way they showed up on Saturday. It really is one of the best parts of being a true community bank, the ability to live and work in this incredible community," said Ed Burns, Community President of United Fidelity Bank.

Attendees enjoyed complimentary food and drinks, face painting, bounce houses, a petting zoo featuring Muddy Moos and over 7,000 free children's books were handed out. More than 35 local nonprofit organizations were also involved, helping connect families with valuable resources and services available throughout the community.

"Storybook Village is a wonderful opportunity for families to come together, enjoy a day of fun, and celebrate the importance of early learning and reading," said Dana Hodges, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast. "We know that when children have positive experiences with books and learning from an early age, it helps build a strong foundation for their future. We are grateful to the many community partners, especially to United Fidelity Bank, who help make this event possible."

The annual event continues to highlight the importance of introducing children to literacy at an early age while creating opportunities for families to engage with educational resources in a welcoming environment. Through partnerships with organizations like United Fidelity Bank, ELC–EC is able to extend its reach beyond the classroom and strengthen connections with families throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties.

ELC–EC extends its appreciation to United Fidelity Bank, participating nonprofit organizations, volunteers and community partners who helped make this year's Storybook Village possible. To learn more about the Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast and its programs, visit www.elc-ec.org.

About the Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast

The Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast serves children, families and early learning providers throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties. Through early childhood education programs, family resources and community partnerships, the Coalition works to ensure every child has access to quality early learning experiences that support their growth, development and future success.

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