

ELCAC NEWSLETTER

The Early Coalition of Alachua County

Scribbles

CEO Plans for the Amazing Give & Children's Week

By Faith Nobles

As April 24, 2025, approaches, Xaviera White, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Alachua County, is preparing for The Amazing Give, a 12-hour fundraising event supporting causes like early childhood education.

She also continues to promote early literacy through "CEO Reads," a monthly program where she reads to children and gifts them free books, supporting the ELCAC Book Club. Additionally, Mrs. White is preparing for Children's Week (April 13-18, 2025) in Tallahassee, where she will join others to advocate for youth development policies in Florida.

Under Mrs. White's leadership, the ELC of Alachua County is advocating for stronger educational and social programs for children and families. From #TheAmazingGive to Children's Week 2025, her efforts will make a lasting impact.

Support the ELC on April 24 during The Amazing Give by following on social media and using #TheAmazingGive. Together, we can help every child in Alachua County thrive!



Xaviera White, CEO

CHILDREN'S WEEK

SCHEDULE

April 13-18, 2025

Tallahassee, Florida

Sunday-Friday

- Celebration of the Hands

Monday

-Advocacy Dinner & Awards Ceremony

Tuesday

-Children's Day at the Capitol
- Storybook Village

Wednesday

-Teen Day at the Capitol

Thursday

-Thoughtful Thursday (Virtual)



Newsletter CONTENT

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- Partnership with Children's Trust
- ELCAC's Spotlight
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- School Readiness & Florida VPK
- Summer Bridge
- Professional Development
- Gold Seal Accreditation
- Challenging Behaviors
- Provider Corner
- Family Engagement
- Literacy Events
- ELC Management Highlighted Event
- Join us on Social Media



4424 NW 13TH ST
GAINESVILLE, FL 32609
(352) 375-4110

GIVE TO ELCAC | THE AMAZING GIVE
#TheAmazingGive

[CLICK TO GIVE](#)



What's Happening at ELCAC?

PARTNERING TO SERVE FAMILIES?

ELCAC and Children's Trust of Alachua County (CTAC) partner to support the ALICE population (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), obtain affordable childcare through a local Childcare Tuition Scholarship.

EMPLOYEE Highlights

Congrats on your Promotion!

**Deborah Sharpe-
Promoted to:**

Lead Parent Support Specialist

**Faith Nobles-
Promoted to:**

Community Outreach Coordinator



Hasha Venn-
TPD Coach

Welcome to ELCAC



Christina Vinson-
Child Development Coordinator

Spotlight Employees



Sherry McMullen-Balchun

Thanks to Sherry's efforts, VPK FAST PM 2 is 100% complete and on time. ELCAC as one of the top 5 regions in the state for completion



Madine Kimball

Madine exceeded her "School Readiness Processing Goals", by reducing parent wait times for eligibility.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Provider Meetings

- Thursday, March 13th: 1-2p
- Thursday, April 10th: 1-2p
- Thursday, May 9th: 1-2p

ELC Tabling at Wild Reading Safari-

FREE books-Santa Fe Zoo
March 8, 2025, 11a-2p

Directors Round Table at ELCAC

Sat, March 22, 2025, 9a-11a

Pinwheel Planting @ UF Shands & ELC office-

Wear Blue
April 1, 2025

Celebrate the Child Event- "Child Abuse Awareness" -ELC

tabling/FREE Books
Westside Park 10a-12p
April 5, 2025

Healthy Heroes Day@ UF Health

Williston Rd.-ELC tabling this
FREE books-9a
April 12, 2025

ELCAC VPK Prom TBD

National Provider "Appreciation Day"
Friday, May 9, 2025

PROGRESS REPORT

Florida VPK School Readiness

2025 Children's Week

Children's Week 2025 is *April 13th-18th*. In celebration that "Every Child Matters" young children, teens, teachers, and families across the state create a large "Celebration of Hands" and display them inside the Capital Rotunda in Tallahassee, Florida each year.

Children's' Week representatives are currently collecting hand artwork for this year's display! Be sure to submit your artwork by March 28 to be included in the 2025 Celebration of the Hands. All artwork will serve as a daily reminder to legislators and visitors that the future of our children rests in their hands.

- [Click Here to Download an Informational Toolkit and Instructions.](#)

Summer Bridge Program for VPK

Exciting NEW Program: The Alachua County Public Schools will be hosting a Summer Bridge Program for VPK Students who attended the 2024-2025 school year program (with any provider public or private) AND scored below the 10th percentile on the FAST PM3 Assessment OR had a qualifying non-participation status. The program will be 4 hours per day for 100 hours this summer. Exact dates, times, and locations will be determined soon.

Please apply online at:

www.tinyurl.com/APCS-VPK or
give us a call for more information at
352-955-6703.



Professional DEVELOPMENT

Regional VPK Facilitator Trainings:

- The Language of CLASS: The Pre-K CLASS Tool: This session provides an introductory/general knowledge of the Pre-K CLASS tool and highlights teacher-child interactions through the Pre-K CLASS lens.
 - **Tuesday, March 4th, 1:00 – 2:30 pm**
- VPK Accountability Presentation: VPK Performance Metrics & Designations: This session provides a general overview of the VPK Performance Metrics & Designations.
 - **Thursday, March 6th, 1:00 – 2:00 pm**
- "Scaffolding and Think, Show, Tell, Talk; Language and Vocabulary Development for Preschoolers –
 - **March 8th – in the ELC Alachua Training Room**
 - **9:00 am – 12:00 pm, Course Code: 11193**

- Virtual Reflection
 - **March 13th from 12:00-1:00 pm on Zoom**
 - *The Zoom link will only be given to those that attend the 3/8/25 training.
- This course consists of three learning components: the instructor-led component, a lesson planning and practice component, and a virtual reflection session. Upon completion of all three learning components participants will receive 5 hours/.5 CEU credits.
- This instructor-led course is appropriate for administrative staff, directors, and teachers of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children. Participants will learn about Language Scaffolding and Think, Show, Tell, Talk instructional strategies used to promote language, vocabulary and oral language skills, helping preschool teachers expose young children to a wide variety of vocabulary words, and to encourage the use of every opportunity during the school day to build language skills.

Register at:

<https://childcaretraining.myflfamilies.com/studentsite/admin/signin>

Shynecia Thony, PD Manager
sthony@elcalachua.org

Quality Initiatives and Child Development

Seeking Quality Childcare with The Gold Seal Accreditation



The Gold Seal Quality Care (Gold Seal) Program acknowledges child care facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect high quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children.

Gold Seal in Alachua

There has been a recent rise in Gold Seal providers in Alachua County due to an admirable effort from owners/directors with the help of the Business & Leadership Institute (BLI). Just during the current 2024-2025 program year, 9 contracted providers have earned a new Gold Seal certificate, for a total of 35 Gold Seal providers contracted with ELCAC.

There are many benefits to achieving accreditation and Gold Seal status. One benefit includes an increased reimbursement rate for SR services. The state allows for a 20% differential above the base rates for providers that have a Gold Seal certificate.

ELCAC would like to celebrate all providers who have Gold Seal status! We appreciate all your hard work and dedication to delivering quality care. If you are interested in joining these providers and obtaining a Gold Seal, please know that BLI offers financial aid for the accreditation process. For more information about BLI contact:

*Robyn F. Perlman, Founder & President,
Chief Future Officer of BLI*
Phone: 305-725-4777

To obtain accreditation without financial aid, you can find more information on The Children's Forum's webpage: <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/gold-seal.stml>.

Once a provider receives a new Gold Seal certificate, they should reach out to the ELCAC Provider Contracts Coordinator, Brandi Thomas (bthomas@elcalachua.org), to complete a profile revision and SR Contract Amendment. Those steps will reflect the new Gold Seal status and apply the 20% differential to the provider's SR payments from ELCAC.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Challenging behavior is a daily concern. About 10 to 14 % of children, birth to 5, demonstrate serious behavioral concerns, resulting in significant impacts to their learning and social interactions.

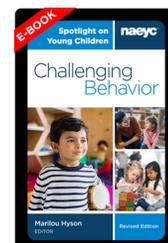
Children engage in challenging behavior for different reasons; preventing and responding to that behavior begins with understanding why it occurs. The below book contains articles that:

- Help teachers build connections with children
- Highlight evidence-based positive behavior intervention and support strategies
- Aim to prevent suspension, expulsion
- Support teachers/families in implementing teaching strategies for social and emotional skills in children to replace the behavior.
- Show how to adapt practices to consider the cultures and contexts of children

"Addressing Challenging Behaviors"

By Marilou Hyson

Reference: <https://www.naeyc.org>



PROVIDERS CORNER



Leanette Simmons

of Simmons Family Day Care Home LLC had a Program Assessment score of 5.71 last year which is a great score. However, through continuous and deliberate effort, she has now *earned a PERFECT score of 7.00 this year!*

Please join us in celebrating Leanette Simmons! She told ELCAC that she made this happen by being open to change in her teaching practices, always learning, staying at eye-level with her students, and planning in advance while also being flexible.

Congratulations Miss Simmons! ELCAC is proud to partner with such quality providers.

New SR Providers in Alachua

- **Grace Christian Prep School LLC**
207 NW 23RD Ave
Gainesville, FL 32609
- **Deeper Purpose Community Church**
119930 N US Highway 441
High Springs, FL 32643

Persimmon at Millhopper

"Nurturing Lifelong Learners"

Persimmon at Millhopper, formerly Step by Step Daycare, began its next chapter in August 2025, continuing a tradition of quality early childhood education. Founded by Bonnie Bowman, Owner of Persimmon Early Learning Academy and Persimmon Elementary, Persimmon provides a warm and engaging learning environment for children ages six weeks through VPK. Guided by a belief in learning through play and educating the whole child, Persimmon creates experiences that foster curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning.

Bonnie is also a mentor for the Business Leadership Institute (BLI) and is passionate about supporting child care business owners looking to improve the quality of care in Alachua County—she would love to connect! Persimmon at Millhopper is now enrolling for all ages. They proudly accept School Readiness funds, making quality early childhood education accessible to more families. Stop by and see how they nurture growth, discovery, and a love for learning every day!

You can reach out to Persimmon at Millhopper by calling 352-373-6988.

PERSIMMON
AT MILLHOPPER



ELCAC Literacy Events

“Celebrate Literacy Week with ELCAC Providers and Cari Chancellor”



**Cari Miller
Chancellor of Early Learning
Division of Early Learning (DEL)
Florida Department of Education**

Cari Miller, Chancellor for the Division of Early Learning (DEL), visited several of our centers on Friday, January 31st, in honor of Celebrate Literacy Week, then ended the day at the Cone Park Community Literacy Event.

Cari read to the students at each center she visited, and handed out books in support of Literacy Week. She was accompanied by Lexi Langieri, VPK Regional Facilitator, Northeast Region, Division of Early Learning, Department of Education. Lexi sat with VPK students to engage in a fun learning activity.



“Lexi plays a fun alphabet recognition activity game, with some VPK students at The Oak Tree (North)”

Chancellor Cari Miller Visits Fred Cone Park in recognition of Literacy Week

During one of the literacy events held at Fred Cone Park, ELCAC, along with Cone Park Library partners, engaged students by reading and telling them about the many jobs of construction workers.

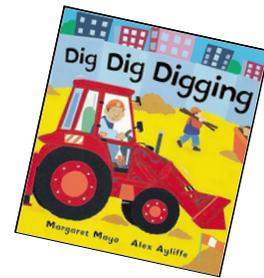
Chancellor Miller continued her day of literacy and fun, with this intimate event including after school children, Alachua County School Board, and local officials was an ending to a great literacy week.



Students had the experience of sitting in “real-life” construction trucks, speaking with individuals who presently work in the construction industry, wear construction hats, participate in activities centered around construction workers, and receive free books to take home

Featured Book Book:

Dig Dis Digging
By Margaret Mayo



Pete the Cat Visit to the High Springs Public Library

During literacy Week, ELCAC's Community Outreach Coordinator, dresses as Pete the Cat and spends time at local Public Library, reading to the students.



Family Services & Family Engagement



Family Services

ELCAC can reveal our new, more inviting, family-friendly lobby this month! It includes more comfortable seating, more options for children to learn and be entertained while they are here, and will include a new kiosk where they can sign in for help.

New Funding

Thanks to new partnerships with Children's Trust of Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, and Alachua County, we now have funding available for families making income above the state guidelines. Visit our website for more details and to apply today!

Statistics (Latest Available)

581 new children were pulled from the Wait List since November 2024. We are currently serving 1845 families in Alachua County.

Family Services Provides:

- An equipped lobby with computer and scanner access, and staff that can explain DEL requirements and the processes of qualifying for care.
- Assistance with navigating the statewide Family Portal and completing necessary paperwork from parents.
- Eligibility checks for parents, as well as enrollments and redeterminations.
- Customized lists of childcare providers that fit the family's unique needs.
- Referrals to community resources.
- Assistance for providers on child transfers and enrollments.
- Coordination with community agencies on emergency referrals.

Why is Family Engagement Important?

The importance of family engagement in a child's education cannot be understated. It impacts academic outcomes, attendance, and graduation rates. District and school leaders play a key role in fostering systemic family engagement and promoting family-school partnerships for school improvement and student achievement.

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

Services are offered to everyone regardless of income. We offer up-to-date information on childcare providers based on individual needs and listings for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, employment opportunities, as well as training, and professional development.

Lobby Hours

- ELCAC has extended their lobby hours to offer more assistance to their families with applications.
- Lobby hours are **M-Th: 8a-4p**, no appointment necessary.
- The lobby is closed on Fridays.



Xaviera White
Chief Executive Director



Kelli Williams
Chief Administrative Officer



John Bonham
Chief Financial Officer



Terrie Robinson
Chief Programs Officer



Angela Moore
Chief Family Services Officer

“Building Trust Through Relationships”



“Alachua’s in the Building”

ELCAC’s staff attended the Association of Early Learning Coalitions (AELC) training camp. During the training, ELCAC’s CEO and management staff participated in a “lip sync” contest.

A MESSAGE TO STAFF AT ELCAC

“I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for each of you. Your dedication and commitment to serving the families of Alachua County do not go unnoticed. Every day, the work you do ensures that children have the opportunity to be ready for school and ready for life—and that impact is truly invaluable.”

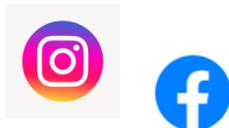
“I appreciate everything you do and the passion you bring to this mission. It is an honor to serve alongside such an incredible team. Thank you for all that you do!”

With Gratitude,
Xaviera White

ELCAC Newsletter Editors

Terrie Robinson - Brandi Thomas - Molly McGowan - Ambrea Smith - Faith Nobles

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BOOK CLUB!
A FREE BOOK
EVERY MONTH FOR
CHILDREN
0-5YRS**