



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., March 21, 2024 - Episcopal Children's Services will dedicate the playground at Howard Academy, 306 NW 7th Ave, Bldg. 3, Ocala, FL 34475, on Friday, March 22, 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. "We went to the playground and once we saw the smiles of the youngsters using it, the project received a 'let's do it' from Martha and me!" Stan stated. As a result, 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. 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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