



## Episcopal Children's Services Father Named Florida Head Start Association Father of the Year

For Immediate Release

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**TALLAHASSEE, FL – November 1, 2022** – Anthony Ray of Jacksonville has been selected as the Florida Head Start Association (FHSA) Father of the Year. As a child, Mr. Ray attended Head Start. Now a father of three, he helps support the Head Start community and the programs his children attend. He has said that the day his daughter was accepted into Head Start was one of the happiest of his life because it was a turning point for his family.

Mr. Ray has been an active volunteer since 2016 with Episcopal Children's Services Head Start/Early Head Start program Child Center for Early Learning in Gainesville, FL. He has served on the Policy Council as a center representative and President of the Parent Committee and volunteers in classrooms. Understanding the impact fathers have on their children's lives, he encourages male participation in the program by facilitating the Male Support Group Session and other events.

Through the years, he and his family have struggled financially, living temporarily in hotels or with relatives in different states. But Mr. Ray's vision and hard work—along with his partnership with his wife, who also works to support the family—have helped his family thrive. While managing commitments to his job, family, and Head Start, he attended college and recently graduated with a degree in Media Communications. As Head Start Family Services Manager Sekkena Welch has said, "Father of the Year is for a father who stands up as a man, a husband and a father for his family and looks life in the face and says: 'I win' because I'm going to take the first step to turn my family's situation around through education."

The Head Start Grantee Recipient selects nominees and is evaluated by a panel of peers and chosen by the FHSA awards committee. Recipients will be honored during the FHSA annual awards luncheon at the Hard Rock Hotel in Daytona Beach, FL, on February 9, 2023. Complete details are available on our website [www.FLHeadStart.org](http://www.FLHeadStart.org).

### **About FHSA**

*The Florida Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 43,000 children and families in Florida. Head Start is an innovative federal-to-local program delivering services from school readiness, comprehensive health, and family support services. The Head Start Program Performance Standards drive programs to strengthen and improve the quality to ensure that all children start school ready to succeed. FHSA has been the voice for Florida's most vulnerable children and families since 1999 and is committed to enhancing and supporting the capability of local Head Start programs in the delivery of high-quality services for our children and families.*

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