

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ORANGE GROVE ASSEMBLES ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO GUIDE SCHOOL EXPANSION

Chattanooga, TN - Earlier this year, Orange Grove Center announced plans to expand its school program by participating in the Individualized Education Account (IEA) Program. This initiative will allow families to enroll their children directly at Orange Grove School, rather than relying solely on public school district placement.

To guide this important transition, Orange Grove has formed an advisory committee composed of experts in exceptional education. Among them are two distinguished professionals: Dr. Shawn Kurrelmeier-Lee and Dr. Shonda Caines, who each bring a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to exceptional education.

Dr. Kurrelmeier-Lee's connection to Orange Grove dates back to 1979, when she served as a student teacher. Now returning as an advisor, she is playing a key role in revamping both the curriculum and classroom structure at Orange Grove School. "The curriculum in special education classrooms should mirror the same depth and content as general education—just adapted to be accessible to every child," she explains. "We're working toward a consistent framework across all classrooms that supports communication, exposure to all subject areas, and learning in the least restrictive way. Ultimately, our goal is to foster independence."

With decades of leadership in both education and nonprofit sectors, Dr. Kurrelmeier-Lee is helping ensure that Orange Grove's updated model is both rigorous and responsive to the needs of its students.

Dr. Shonda Caines also brings a unique blend of personal and professional insight. Her passion for this work began after her son Jack was born with Down syndrome and later diagnosed with autism, and she serves as the Lower School Head and Director of Exceptional Education Programs at Chattanooga Christian School.

At Orange Grove, Dr. Caines is instrumental in helping navigate the transition to the IEA Program. She also helps address a critical question: why should families choose Orange Grove School? "Orange Grove has the capacity to serve a wide range of students, including those with complex medical needs," she says. "The facilities offer a wide array of opportunities for students, including a natural transition into post-secondary services. And one of the greatest strengths is that private providers can continue supporting the child within the school environment—connecting trusted providers families have worked with for years with Orange Grove staff to offer consistent, coordinated care tailored to the student."

As the school prepares for these changes in fall 2025, both advisors are confident the expansion will have a lasting and positive impact. "This change will result in a more complete, consistent educational experience for students," says Dr. Kurrelmeier-Lee. "Orange Grove is making the right investments," adds Dr. Caines. "By bringing in professionals from different disciplines and perspectives, this expansion reflects the Center's long-term commitment to serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Chattanooga community."

Families interested in learning more about direct enrollment at Orange Grove School can visit www.orangegrovecenter.org/school and complete an Admissions Interest Inquiry form.

About Orange Grove Center

Founded in 1953, Orange Grove Center is a private, non-profit organization that serves 1,000+ adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in the Chattanooga and North Georgia areas. For more information about programs and services, visit <https://www.orangegrovecenter.org/>. For weekly updates, follow @orangegrovectr on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

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