

The Heartbeat

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER

44TH ANNUAL LAKELAND PARADE: "ROCKIN' AROUND LAKELAND"



The 44th Annual Lakeland Parade, hosted by the **Junior League of Greater Lakeland** and the **City of Lakeland**, was the perfect stage to show how **Kindness Rocks** at the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County. Our incredible team came together with passion, creativity, and heart to bring this message to life for our community. Everywhere along the route, families smiled, waved, and joined in celebrating the power of kindness. Our float highlighted how simple acts of compassion can brighten a child's day and strengthen a community. This year's parade wasn't just about lights and music; it was about showing that kindness truly makes our

city shine. We were also honored to be recognized with the Best Community Float award for our kindness theme!

As we wrapped up the night, one thing was clear: kindness doesn't just rock the parade, it rocks all of Polk County! A heartfelt thank you to the panel of judges, the Junior League of Greater Lakeland and the City of Lakeland for this special honor and for celebrating kindness with us!

SEASON OF KINDNESS: HONORING OUR COMMUNITY HEROES

As we celebrate this season of kindness, we pause to recognize the heroes who protect, serve, and support our community every day. From first responders and medical teams to law enforcement and community partners, your dedication keeps our children and families safe and supported. The Early Learning Coalition of Polk County is deeply grateful for the countless ways you strengthen our community, often behind the scenes. Thank you for being the heartbeat of Polk County and for showing our children what it truly means to serve with kindness.



MAGIC IN THE MOMENTS: ENDING DECEMBER WITH HEART

As we end the month of December, it's a natural time for families to pause, reflect, and think about what truly matters most. This season of wrapping up the year invites us to be more intentional with our time, our routines, and the moments we share with our children. Small choices, like reading together, sitting for a few extra minutes at breakfast, or talking about feelings can make big differences in your child's growth.



Being intentional doesn't mean being perfect; it means noticing what your family needs and taking one simple step at a time. As you look ahead to a new year, consider what brings your family joy, calm, and connection, and try to make more room for those moments. Together, let's close December with gentle reflection, new intentions, and meaningful memories with our children.

EXCELLENCE IN ACTION: CELEBRATING OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDERS

The Early Learning Coalition of Polk County is proud to celebrate our VPK providers who have earned the **Designation of Excellent** from the **Division of Early Learning (DEL)** for the 2024–2025 school year. This is the highest distinction a VPK provider can

receive, and certificates have been awarded to recognize this remarkable achievement.

Our recognized VPK providers are outstanding early childhood professionals who create engaging, high-quality learning experiences that build strong foundations for school readiness and lifelong success. Their dedication is truly shaping the future of our community's children.

Once again, we celebrate the incredible work they do!

2024 – 2025 VPK Providers Who Have Earned the Designation of Excellent from the Division of Early Learning (DEL)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A Child's Creative Learning Center, LLC | 33. Just 4 Kids Preschool Phase II |
| 2. Academy At People's Church | 34. Kid City USA – Lake Wales |
| 3. Alturas Elementary | 35. Kids Academy Childcare |
| 4. Bartow WEE Care INC | 36. Kids Academy Learning Center
EGLAN INC |
| 5. Bella Citta Elementary | 37. Kids Academy Learning Center USA |
| 6. Berkley Charter School | 38. Kinder Kollege Enrichment Center
INC |
| 7. Bobbie's Busy Bee | 39. Little Hawk Academy |
| 8. Brilliant Minds Early Learning
Academy LLC | 40. Medulla Elementary |
| 9. Caldwell Elementary | 41. Mi Escuela Montessori |
| 10. Chain of Lakes Elementary | 42. Montessori Preschool of Lakeland |
| 11. Children's Village Enrichment | 43. Mulberry Christian Academy |
| 12. Code Academy | 44. New Beginnings Preschool and
Learning Center LLC. |

13. Covenant Child Development Center	45. North Ridge Christian Preschool
14. Creative Minds Learning Academy	46. Northside Christian Preschool
15. Crystal Lake Elementary	47. Oasis Christian Academy VPK
16. Dawsons Learning Academy	48. Our Angel Kids Academy Learning Center, INC.
17. Dr. N.E. Roberts Academy	49. Parkway Christian Academy
18. Dundee Elementary	50. Phoenix Christian Academy II
19. Early Childhood Learning Center	51. Phoenix Christian Academy LLC
20. Early Childhood Learning Center (Airside)	52. R Bruce Wagner Elementary
21. Executive Leaders Christian Academy LLC	53. RCMA Mulberry Child Development Center
22. Explore Point LLC	54. Resurrection Catholic School
23. First Methodist Childcare Center	55. Rochelle School of Arts
24. First United Methodist Preschool	56. Scott Lake Elementary
25. Foundation of Love Academy LLC	57. Smart Start Enterprise INC DBA Lake Ruby Learning Center
26. Futurecare Learning Center INC	58. Southside Learning Center INC.
27. Graham's Learning Academy	59. Tiny Tykes Preschool
28. Griffin Elementary	60. Whole Child Christian Academy LLC
29. Haines City Child Development Center LLC	61. Winterset Learning Center LLC
30. Head of the Class Learning Center	62. Wright's Learning Center LLC
31. Highlands Grove Elementary	63. YMCA
32. Jewett School of the Arts	



JOYFUL JOURNEYS WITH FAMILY: SNUGGLE-IN FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!



1) Hot Cocoa & Story Night

Set up a delightful “cocoa bar” with marshmallows, sprinkles, and whipped cream. Cuddle up as a family and take turns reading favorite stories or holiday classics.

2) The Cheerful Creations Table

Gather around the table to create Kindness Cards, paper snowflakes, or simple garlands to decorate your home. Let creativity—and laughter—fill the air!

3) Jolly Pajama Party!

Slip into your coziest pajamas, pick a beloved movie, and pop plenty of popcorn. Make the night extra special by going “no phones”—just pure, snuggly fun.

4) Treats & Kindness Giving

Bake a batch of sweet treats together, with everyone helping in some way. Wrap up goodies in small bags or on plates, then spread cheer by delivering them to friends and neighbors.

5) Glow Night Games

Turn down the lights and play favorite board games, cards, or charades by the soft glow of battery candles, glow sticks, or flashlights. A sprinkle of “magic” makes every game more memorable.

These activities invite warmth, laughter, and heartfelt connection—perfect for creating memories that last!



POSTIVE PARENTING TIP: HOLIDAY STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The holidays can be fun, but they can also be busy and stressful with travel, shopping, noise, bright lights, special foods, and packed schedules. These disruptions can be especially hard for children who need routine and predictability to manage their

behavior. The tips in this article will help make the season more enjoyable for you and your child. Please click the link below to read more.

[MORE INFO](#)

KINDNESS CONNECTIONS: 13 KID-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR



Ring in the New Year with kid-friendly fun! Enjoy a mix of games, tasty treats, simple crafts, and easy STEM projects to keep children engaged and excited. Even if they don't make it to midnight, families can still celebrate with a custom "countdown" that

fits their schedule and ends with a big moment of cheer. Click the link below for ideas to make your New Year's Eve special, playful, and stress-free for everyone!

[MORE INFO](#)

WANT MORE ELC NEWS?



[Visit the ELC Newsroom](#)



Have a photo or story you'd like to share with us?

- Post to our [Facebook](#) page
- Direct Message us on [Instagram](#)
- Tag us on [Twitter](#) using #ELCofPolk
- Email pictures to [Layla Cribb](#)

