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**NEWS RELEASE**  
For Immediate Release  
April 20, 2016

**MANATEE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AWARDS A \$5,000 GRANT TO THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION FOR RAISING A READER PROGRAM IN MANATEE COUNTY**

**Palmetto, Florida, April 20, 2016** – The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Manatee County, Inc. has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Evans Family Charitable Fund of the Manatee Community Foundation. The grant is for the continued implementation of the nationally renowned "Raising a Reader" program, whose network offers an evidence-based early literacy and parent engagement program that has demonstrated improvement in the reading readiness skills of children from birth to age five.

The program engages parents in a routine of daily book reading with their children to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding, and early literacy skills critical for school success and connects the family to local libraries. The program addresses the community need for children to be ready for school and impacts the children's ability to read at grade-level, upon entering kindergarten.

Each child entering the program will receive approximately 100 books per year. The Early Learning Coalition's nationally-certified coordinator will train preschool teachers and parents on how to engage their child by sharing a book. At the culmination of the program, families will be connected to the public library of their choice to continue the practice of borrowing books and reading.

The Manatee Community Foundation is a creative cost-effective and tax-efficient way for people to invest in the charitable causes they care about most. The Manatee Community Foundation has grown to over 200 donor funds and \$36 million in assets. Over \$15 million in grants and scholarships have been "given back" to the community since 1998. The Manatee Community Foundation awards annual competitive grants to local non-profits that address needs and opportunities impacting the citizens of Manatee, in the areas of arts & humanities, community development, education, environment, health and human services. The Raising a Reader program is aligned with the community's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading that is spearheaded by the United Way of Manatee County, the Manatee Community Foundation, the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, and Manatee Public Schools.

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The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Inc. is a multi-service agency dedicated to helping children develop skills that they will need to be successful in school and life. The agency's focus is on high quality school readiness opportunities for all children and their families, understanding that it is in the first years of life that a child's future educational success is determined and the critical role of parents, as their child's first and most important teacher. To learn more about Coalition's services, go to [www.elc-manatee.org](http://www.elc-manatee.org) or call 941-757-2900, extension 212.



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