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BB&T Lighthouse Project Teams with Leadership Lee County Class of 2009 to Build Natural Playscape

FORT MYERS, Fla. (June 22, 2011) BB&T and Leadership Lee County are teaming up to build a new “Natural Playscape” at the P. A. Geraci Child Development Center on Canal Street in Fort Myers. The child care center, operated by Child Care of Southwest Florida, is undergoing a makeover during the next few weeks to transform its playground into a “Natural Playscape” where children can learn about nature and wildlife while exercising their bodies.

“We’re excited to be a part of this wonderful new project for the community. Our employees will be helping with installing a rock climbing wall, an imaginary stream with a bridge, and creating a butterfly garden,” said Robert Bassett, Area Executive of BB&T.

BB&T is providing \$8,000 to help pay for materials at the center, which serves primarily low-income families. An additional \$4,000 from the Chamber of Southwest Florida 2009 Class of Leadership Lee County will be used to help pay for needed equipment and materials. BB&T employees and supporters have done the lion’s share of the work, supported by LLC graduates. Volunteers are still needed for the last phase of the project on Saturday, June 25th.

“Natural Playscape” is a new concept in playgrounds being introduced by Child Care of Southwest Florida at its six centers throughout Lee and Hendry counties. The first “Natural Playscape” opened last fall at the Joseph H. Messina Children’s Center at 4650 Fowler St. in Fort Myers. BB&T also was the sponsor of that project.

“The Natural Playscape will be an educational experience to help children appreciate nature and wildlife as well as inspire creativity and exercise their minds and bodies,” said Dieula Dominique, director of the P.A. Geraci Child Development Center. “Research has shown that green spaces lower children’s stress levels, decrease the rate of attention deficit disorders and reduce incidents of bullying.” Dominique said the Natural Playscape will include a rock wall to climb, stepping logs, shade trees with benches and a beach with sand for children to explore.

P.A. Geraci Child Development Center

The P.A. Geraci Child Development Center is licensed to care for 124 children from infancy to age 8. Enrollment is now open for the Voluntary Pre-K program, which begins this fall. Hours of operation are 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to volunteer, call Dominique at 239-337-4995.

Child Care of Southwest Florida

Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc. is a private non-profit organization dedicated to providing high quality child care services throughout Southwest Florida. The agency provides child care for 700 children from infancy through age 8 at its six child care centers throughout Lee and Hendry counties. In addition, the agency conducts training for child care workers, and administers the federal food program in 14 counties for child care centers and family child care homes. More information is available at www.ccswfl.org.

BB&T

As of March 31, BB&T Corporation (NYSE: BBT) is the 10th largest financial services holding company in the U.S. with more than \$163 billion in assets and market capitalization of \$22.4 billion. Based in Winston-Salem, N.C., the company operates more than 1,800 financial centers in 12 states and Washington, D.C., and offers a full range of consumer and commercial banking, securities brokerage.

Leadership Lee County

The Leadership Lee County Community Leadership Program is a unique program offered by The Chamber of Southwest Florida to help newcomers as well as long-term residents understand the dynamics of the Lee County community and its role in the region. The Chamber developed the course for local residents and business persons interested in intensive learning. Visit our website to learn more about this one-of-a-kind Leadership program at www.chamber-swflorida.com.

The Chamber of Southwest Florida

The Mission of the Chamber of Southwest Florida is to be a regional business organization that builds leadership as a strategic contribution to the community. We will be strong advocates of our members' interest before government and we will encourage the continuing development of regional infrastructure. We will deliver quality information, services, and value to our members that provide a positive contribution to their business. Contact the Chamber with any questions regarding our ongoing mission at chamberswf@gmail.com or 239-275-2102. Visit us on the web at www.chamber-swflorida.com.