

SPRING 2026



YOUR CHILDCARE RESOURCES

# connection



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## Investing in the future of our nation

Starfest saw more than 325 passionate supporters of early childhood education for two unforgettable gatherings in support of Childcare Resources' mission. Held on Tuesday, February 10, at the beautiful Quail Valley River Club and Quail Valley at The Pointe, the day was a powerful reminder of what our community can accomplish when we rally around our youngest learners.

This year's special guest was retired U.S. Air Force Major General Mike Hall, who delivered an inspiring message on kindergarten readiness and the importance of ensuring every child has a strong start.

"Preparing children for kindergarten isn't just an educational goal," General Hall shared. "It's part of our national responsibility. When we invest in young children, we strengthen the future of our communities and our country."

*On the cover: Starfest presenter Mike Hall with Executive Director Shannon McGuire Bowman  
Above: Lisa and Willie Bullock and Tena Boehm*

During the luncheon program, General Hall spoke about the critical early years of development and the role that high-quality early learning plays in shaping lifelong outcomes. He emphasized that supporting children and families from the very beginning is not only the right thing to do, but a duty we all share.

That evening, supporters gathered under the stars along the Indian River, had the opportunity to meet General Hall, and heard him speak on what he witnessed firsthand at Childcare Resources.

“What happens here is extraordinary,” he noted. “It’s the kind of work that deserves recognition, investment, and replication. Every child deserves this kind of start.”

Starfest 2026 was a true testament to the shared commitment of this community to champion children, families, and the educators who guide them. We are deeply grateful to General Hall and to everyone who helped make this year’s Starfest such a meaningful success. ★



*Above: Starfest co-chairs Barbie Horton, Joan Gee, and Mary Sue Brown*

*Below: Presenting Sponsors Elke and George Fetterolf*





## Founders' Award

Attendees at the Starfest luncheon had the honor of celebrating the presentation of this year's Founders' Award to Susan Hunter, a cherished member of the Childcare Resources family and a steadfast advocate for early learning. Susan has been a trusted advisor whose guidance and support have helped Childcare Resources strengthen its impact across our community.

Since Starfest's inception, she has also served as a dedicated Table Captain, offering unwavering commitment year after year. We are deeply grateful for Susan's vision, leadership, and lasting contributions to our mission. ★

### Founders' Award Recipients

Susan Hunter  
Carol Buhl  
Karla Spooner  
Sherry Waddell &  
Claudia McNulty

*Above: Childcare Resources co-founder Kathy Marshall, Executive Director Shannon McGuire Bowman, 2026 Recipient Susan Hunter, and previous recipients Carol Buhl and Sherry Waddell.*



## You Lift Early Educators

Childcare Resources hosted 125 early childhood educators from more than 35 local sites for a professional learning workshop with Dr. Peg Oliveira, director of the Gesell Program in Early Childhood at Yale University. The session, “Learning to Play, Playing to Learn,” explored the power of play in child development, showing educators how guided, open-ended, and imaginative play supports learning in unique ways.

Participants engaged in lively discussions and discovered new approaches to creating classrooms where children can explore and grow with confidence. The workshop was held in partnership with the Vero Beach Museum of Art, providing an inspiring space to spark creativity and innovation.

By expanding early educators’ understanding of playful learning, we help ensure that children everywhere in our community have access to engaging, high-quality experiences that prepare them for success. None of this would be possible without the support of people like you, whose generosity allows us to bring innovative early learning opportunities to even more educators and children. ★

*Above: 125 educators attended the workshop.*

*Below: Dr. Peg Oliveira and Childcare Resources’ early childhood education coaching team. L-R: Amanda Gooch, Todd Morrow, Dr. Peg, and Jensen McCord.*



Inside our NAEYC-accredited school, we see every day that young children learn best through play, exploration, and hands-on experiences. That's why process-based art is a meaningful part of our play-based curriculum. Instead of focusing on a perfect finished product, we celebrate the creative journey as children experiment with materials, test ideas, and make discoveries along the way. This kind of open-ended art supports brain development by strengthening problem-solving, fine motor skills, creativity, confidence, and self-expression.

In our Alligator classroom of one-year-olds, children recently explored a project that highlighted their unique identities while also practicing early learning concepts like shapes and colors. Through experiences like these, we help children learn that their ideas matter, while also sharing their artistic process with families so they can see learning unfolding in real time. ★



*Little Hands,  
Big Brain Development*



## Early Screenings, Early Success

Our Wellness and Early Intervention program supports the whole child, right where they learn and grow.

Each year, our students receive on-site hearing and vision screenings to help us catch concerns early. When additional support is needed, we bring the help to them. Contracted therapists come directly to our campus during school hours to provide speech, physical, occupational, and behavioral therapies.

*Above: Director of Wellness and Early Intervention Tracey Griffis, RN, BSN, conducts a hearing screening with a Childcare Resources School student.*

*Right: Therapist Livya Barreirinhas and a Childcare Resources School student work in the on-site therapy gym.*

*What does that mean for families?*

Less time away from work. Fewer outside appointments. And peace of mind knowing their child is being supported in a familiar, caring environment.

By meeting children where they are and removing barriers for parents, we help set families up for success from the very beginning. ★



Childcare Resources is proud to have been the first nonprofit organization in Indian River County to establish an endowment fund with the Indian River Community Foundation in 2013. More than a decade later, that early commitment to long-term sustainability has reached a remarkable milestone. In 2025, our endowment surpassed \$1 million, making Childcare Resources the first local charity partnered with the Community Foundation to achieve this level of growth.

“Childcare Resources’ financial stability is a guarantee to economically challenged families in our community that a high quality early education is here for their children today,” says Jeff Pickering, President and CEO of Indian River Community Foundation. “A permanent endowment is the organization’s promise to be here for future generations.”

The fund continues to be one of the Foundation’s longest-standing and strongest-performing endowment accounts, reflecting careful stewardship and a shared belief in planning for the future. This milestone ensures that high-quality early childhood education, wellness services, and outreach initiatives will continue to serve children and families in Indian River County for generations to come.

Learn more about how our endowment fund helps secure the future of early learning in our community.

Please contact Tiffani Atteo: 772-567-3202 ext. 102

*on the  
cover*



Were you spotted at Starfest? View our complete photo gallery:  
[www.ChildcareResourcesIR.org/Starfest!](http://www.ChildcareResourcesIR.org/Starfest!)



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