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PRESS RELEASE

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Education Foundation Partners with St. Lucie Public Schools to Make Significant Impact
More than \$700,000 raised to support public education

PORT ST LUCIE, FLORIDA: The Education Foundation of St. Lucie County has a lot to be grateful for as it wraps up 2024 - 2025. Over the course of the year, the Foundation has raised over \$700,000 that was used to fund several new initiatives that elevated the academic programs within St. Lucie Public Schools. These included the adoption of an island on the Indian River Lagoon, an afterschool program called Project 001 that is teaching students to program in AI helping to solve community issues, 'Internet Essentials' providing free and reduced cost internet access to families in need, and grants to teachers that enhanced their classrooms' curriculum.

Thom Jones, Foundation President states that "A few years ago our Board pivoted to build the capacity of the Foundation by shifting to a mixed program portfolio consisting of direct impact work with the District, teachers, and students; indirect work with community partners and grant providers and a movement towards advocacy, research and action. We are aligning our programs more directly to District goals while searching for breakthrough projects that provide multi year funding." Jones indicated that there is "more to come". This includes the creation of an outdoor science classroom on an island in the Indian River Lagoon called "Eco Education Island". Eco Education Island will support the St. Lucie Schools Marine & Oceanographic Academies (MOA) and help improve the health of one of the largest subtropical lagoons in the United States.

2023 - 2024 was a hallmark year for the Education Foundation with more than \$1.3 million raised. The largest program last year was supporting the resiliency of students, a major effort by the School District. According to Dr. Jon R. Prince, Superintendent of St. Lucie Public Schools, "**The Education Foundation** has been a key partner in supporting our academic programs. The Foundation aligns their efforts with our goals. Due to our collective focus on student resiliency and the reduction of absenteeism rates, we were able to increase average daily attendance by 900 students *per day*, translating to 5,400 academic hours of instruction for these students. This has helped

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boost our graduation rates.”

The Foundation will begin the 2025 - 2026 fiscal year with a Community Showcase Event on August 21, 2025 at the School District Administrative Offices. This free event will provide an overview of the Foundations’ activities and partnership with the School District. This program and several summer programs for teachers are part of the Foundation's robust plan which supports the District by elevating opportunities for its teachers.

The St. Lucie County Education Foundation, Inc. is the direct support organization for the St. Lucie County Public School District. Founded in 1990, the Foundation’s mission is to connect the community to classrooms, innovate learning, power potential and celebrate success. The Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that relies on corporate and individual benefactors and grants to raise funds to meet their goals. For more information, please visit www.efslc.org.

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Photo by St. Lucie Public Schools Media Services

Photo 1: Representatives from St. Lucie Public Schools accept a check for \$350,000 to be used towards the resiliency program and provided by the Education Foundation. Pictured left to right are Troy Ingersoll, Jack Kelly, Debbie Hawley, Heather Roland, Dr. Jon R. Prince, Dr. Helen Wild, Jennifer Richardson, Dr. Donna Mills, Kimberly Jay, Jackie Wolfe, and Thom Jones - Education Foundation President.