

MERIDIAN – Alliance Health Center is pleased to announce the donation of \$10,000 to the Lowndes County School District, as part of the Mississippi Education Credit program.

“The Alliance Health Center has been heavily involved in promoting mental health advocacy through a coalition we organized with local community leaders in Lowndes County,” said Jay Shehi, CEO, Alliance Health Center. “It is an honor to direct this funding to the school district to help it build its early childhood program into the cornerstone of education in its community.”

In 2013, the state of Mississippi established the Early Learning Collaborative (ELC) Act. The law established a collaborative delivery, state-funded pre-kindergarten program in which private or parochial schools, private child-care centers and/or Head Start Centers may join with a local public school district and compete for state funds to provide pre-K services to a community. All funded collaboratives must adhere to state regulations requiring that they meet nationally recognized standards of quality.

Under the ELC Act of 2013, individuals or corporations that make contributions to support the local matching fund of an approved ELC may be eligible to receive a state tax credit for the donated amount up to \$1,000,000. The Mississippi Department of Revenue can approve 1:1 tax credits up to the amount the legislature appropriates to the ELC Act each year.

Dr. Kristie Jones, the director of Federal Programs for the LCSD, said establishing excellence in pre-K in Mississippi and nationwide is crucial because it is harder for children to achieve their potential if they don't develop important skills when they start school. Jones said support from individuals and industry partners such as Alliance Health Center will provide the momentum necessary for the LCSD's early childhood program to grow into a cornerstone of education.

“Alliance Health Center has started our giving initiative, but we need more individuals and industry partners to take the challenge,” Jones said. “Every investment into our ELC program is a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. You or your business will receive tax relief, but most importantly you will be shaping the community you envision for our future. Come help us grow! Come grow with us!”

The ELC Act of 2013 established the cost of providing pre-K services to 4-year-old children at \$5,000 per child enrolled in a full-day program and \$2,500 per child enrolled in a half-day program. The state of Mississippi provides half of these costs. The state requires local matching funds to cover the other half. Those funds may include local tax dollars, federal dollars (as allowed), parent tuition, philanthropic contributions or in-kind donation of facilities, equipment and services required as part of the program, such as food service or health screenings.

“Birth to age 5 are the critical years for learning and development,” Jones said. “Overwhelming research agrees on the lasting impact of high-quality early childhood education programs. Students who attend high-quality early childhood program are more likely to graduate high school, have better attendance and fewer behavior problems and will be less likely to repeat grades. Early childhood education programs build the foundations for lifelong success. The mission of the LCSD is to challenge all students to attain their greatest potential. The ELC program is a beautiful beginning.”

Serving the community since 1963, Alliance Health Center is a 214-bed acute psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment hospital. It provides behavioral healthcare to adolescents, adults and senior adults in Mississippi and Alabama. For more information, go to:

<https://alliancehealthcenter.com/>

If you would like to contribute or if you would like more information about the ELC in Lowndes County, contact Jones at: kristie.jones@lowndes.k12.ms.us

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