



Press Release from Kids First!

Subject: Grants to St. John Montessori School
and Giffit Hill School

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Kids First! Awards Grants Valued at \$40,000 to Two Island

Early Learning Programs

Total Value of Awards Granted Surpasses \$100,000

Kids First!, a VI based non profit organization which supports education on St. John announced it has awarded 4 grants totaling \$40,000 to two island early learning programs.

St. John Montessori School—This school was opened by Debra Polucci in September, 2008 at the facilities of the John’s Folly Learning Institute. Using the well regarded “Montessori Method”, her school currently provides instruction for children ages 3-7. It is the only licensed early learning program in the Coral Bay area, filling a critical need in this community. As is often the case with quality pre-school

programs, the cost of attending can exceed the capability of parents to pay. To help address this problem, Kids First! is providing a grant of \$13,750 for financial aid to help offset the cost of attending the school. This aid will be administered by the Montessori School and will be directed at needs based students. In addition, Kids First! is providing a 2 for 1 matching grant for donations made by individuals and businesses to the Montessori School. This grant will be in place through the 2010-2011 school year up to a maximum of \$5,000. Last, Kids First! will provide a grant of \$2,200 for the Montessori School to file for non-profit status.

Commenting on these grants, Ms. Polucci said “I am thrilled at the support Kids First! is providing our school. We are part of a vibrant community that understands the importance of early education. With these grants we will be able to expand our program to children who would not otherwise be able to attend while providing an incentive for the entire Coral Bay community to support our efforts”.

Also commenting on this grant, Sharon Coldren, President of the Coral Bay Community Foundation said, “Having a quality early education program right here in Coral Bay is very important to our community. Kids First! is enabling the St. John Montessori school to expand and better meet the known educational needs of our community. The matching grant program provides an incentive for all of us who love Coral Bay’s children to help assure this pre-school program is available to every child, regardless of their parent’s income”.

Gifft Hill School—Gifft Hill School offers the largest early learning program on St. John. Using the Creative Curriculum method, it offers a quality educational opportunity for children age 3-6. Unfortunately, the cost of attending this program often exceeds what parents are able to pay. That is why Kids First! is providing a \$20,000 grant to assist parents with the cost of tuition in the 2010-2011 school year. Commenting on this grant, Ed Deusser, interim Headmaster said “Kids First! has been a generous supporter of early education across St. John including the Gifft Hill School. This is our fourth major grant and we are grateful for the support they have provided us”.

The most important time in the development of a child is birth to age 5. If children arrive at formal school unprepared, immediate remedial action is required, and if a child is not brought up to grade level in basic skills by 4th grade, the outlook for success in school and beyond is in doubt. The VI public school’s mission does not include early learning so private institutions must meet this need, often at costs which are prohibitive for parents. Kids First! is using its financial aid to expand the number of children who can attend a quality pre-school program while enhancing the financial viability of the schools and improving the quality of education they provide. Commenting on these latest grants, Bruce Claflin, President of Kids First! said “We have provided \$100,000 of grants in our first 18 months of operation thanks to the generous support of individuals and businesses. We encourage the entire community to support our efforts so we can continue this important work”.

About Kids First!—Kids First! is a VI 501(c)(3) corporation. Its mission is to support a quality education for all the children of St. John in a safe and nurturing environment. To learn more about Kids First! visit our web site at www.kidsfirststj.org.

About the St. John Montessori School—Located in the Johns Folly Learning Institute, the St. John Montessori School is a fully accredited AMI (Association Montessori International) School, providing a quality, pre-school education to support the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of our children. To learn more about the St. John Montessori School please contact Ms. Debra Polucci at 340 774-9594 or debrapolucci@yahoo.com

About Giff Hill School (GHS)—The GHS is St. Johns' only school which provides a pre-school through 12th grade education. GHS offers a dynamic academic program designed to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. To learn more contact www.giffhillschool.org or call 340 776-1730.