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### **Grace Place for Children and Families hosts inaugural Young Authors Festival**

Grace Place's first-ever Young Authors Festival proved to be a setting where imagination had no bounds. Students in grades 3-5 authored and illustrated their own unique stories in preparation for the celebration where community partners, professional authors, volunteers, and friends from the Boys and Girls Club joined together in their love for books.

"We're excited to provide young authors with a platform to showcase their creativity and empower them to share their stories with confidence," shared Grace Place's Chief Program Officer, Marcie Curry. "Our hope is that this festival will instill a sense of pride and accomplishment in every participant."

Kicking off the event in small groups led by local volunteers and authors, students shared the inspiration for their original stories and the challenges they overcame in the writing process.

The festival also showcased a book talk from the Fanm Kreyol Storytellers, authors of the Haitian American children's collection titled *The Ansanm Collection*. During the session, students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn what it takes to become a professional author.

To wrap up the festival, the improv troupe from The Naples Players brought select stories to life on stage, engaging students in hilarious skits and an original song that students and staff alike are still singing today! Among the highlights were titles like, *The Knight that Saved Grace Place*, *The Middle Kid on Christmas*, and *The Crystal Cave*, authored by talented Grace Place students.

With the festival's magic still lingering on campus days later, the young authors have continued to share and act out their stories in their afterschool classrooms. Each day, Grace Place students dedicate themselves to developing strong literacy skills and the Young Authors Festival provided a platform to honor and to celebrate their hard work and unique voices.

### **ABOUT GRACE PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Grace Place for Children and Families is a nonprofit family literacy center committed to providing pathways out of poverty by educating children and families. Grace Place enrolls over 1200 individuals in its education programs each year. Its nationally recognized Bright Beginnings program, a Grace Place Family Literacy Model®, serves preschool children and their parents. Grace Place School Age Programs, funded by the Florida Department of Education, provides afterschool, summer, and college access programming to K-12 youth. The Adult Education program at Grace Place offers English language, literacy, computer literacy, and citizenship courses. Additionally, the Food Pantry at Grace Place serves over 300 families each week. Collaborating with community partners, we offer medical and mental health screenings, referrals, and financial literacy classes in Golden Gate. Explore volunteer opportunities in literacy, mentoring, adult education, and more at [www.graceplacenaples.org](http://www.graceplacenaples.org).