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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grace Place Receives \$20,000 Grant from Fifth Third Foundation to Expand Middle School Career Pathways Program

Naples, Fla. – Grace Place for Children and Families has received a \$20,000 grant from the Fifth Third Foundation to support Project Spark, an initiative within its Middle School Program that introduces students to high-demand career pathways and builds critical skills for long-term success.

Project Spark provides middle school students with hands-on learning experiences that connect classroom skills to real-world applications. Through project-based learning and exposure to careers in technology, manufacturing, and healthcare, students gain early insight into potential futures while strengthening academic engagement.

"At Grace Place, middle school is a critical time for students to stay engaged and begin thinking about what comes next," said Larā Fisher, CEO of Grace Place. "With support from the Fifth Third Foundation, we are helping students build confidence, explore new possibilities, and stay on track toward high school graduation and future career opportunities."

Serving students in grades six through eight, Project Spark integrates academic support with career exploration, helping students connect what they learn in school to real opportunities in their community. Through hands-on projects, collaboration, and leadership development, students build both technical and transferable skills, including communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

By introducing career pathways early, the program expands students' sense of what is possible and helps prepare them for the next steps in their education. Project Spark also serves as an entry point into Grace Place's broader college and career readiness continuum, supporting students as they transition into high school programs, mentorship opportunities, and future workforce pathways.

Support from the Fifth Third Foundation helps make these opportunities accessible to students who may otherwise have limited exposure to career exploration and professional networks.

Project Spark was financially assisted by the Fifth Third Foundation, Fifth Third Bank, N.A., Trustee.

For more information about Grace Place and its programs, visit graceplacenaples.org.

ABOUT GRACE PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Grace Place for Children and Families is a nonprofit organization in Naples, Florida, dedicated to removing barriers to opportunity by providing free, family-centered English literacy programs.

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By supporting every member of the family, from infants through adults, Grace Place strengthens English skills, academic achievement, and pathways to college and careers, enrolling more than 1,300 students annually. Discover more at graceplacenaples.org, follow @graceplacenaples on social, or schedule a campus tour to see the impact in action.

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