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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Children's Advocacy Center's receives donation from St. Joe Community Foundation for new Walton County center**

*DeFuniak Springs, FL (October 23, 2015)*...The construction progress continues in DeFuniak Springs at the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's (ECCAC) new Pierce Family Walton County facility, slated to open in spring 2016. The child-friendly facility will serve abused children and their families in a neutral child-friendly environment, and will staff 45 offices in four wings to include a Welcome Wing, Intervention Wing, Justice Wing and Healing Wing.

Julie Hurst, CEO of ECCAC, recently met with Janet Greeno, Executive Director of the St. Joe Community Foundation, to show off the site, as well as to graciously receive a check from St. Joe's organization for \$23,439.

"On behalf of the St. Joe Foundation, we are so glad we can be of help with this important cause for the well-being of kids," said Greeno. "Our mission is to assist in funding healthcare, education, cultural arts and environmental initiatives for deserving organizations in Walton and Bay Counties."

St. Joe's donation will be used to fund recording and camera equipment in the Center's forensic interview rooms. This equipment will be used when children share their stories with forensic interviewers, while other on-site agencies and ECCAC staff observe from a neighboring room.

According to Hurst, "The forensic interview is the first step in the healing process for our impacted children. It gives us the opportunity to better determine which services may be needed to help the child while gathering information to hold alleged offenders accountable."

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, located in Niceville since 2001, opened a Walton County satellite Center in DeFuniak Springs in 2012 to provide victim advocacy and mental health therapy. They will relocate to the new facility.

ECCAC's mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect, protect children in Okaloosa and Walton Counties, and restore the lives and futures of these impacted children. The Center's facility in Niceville houses a multidisciplinary team of child protection personnel, prosecutors, law enforcement, DCF, therapists, staff and volunteers. The Walton County facility will have a similar set-up. New in the Walton County Center will be a high-tech Internet Crimes Against Children Division set-up extensively with computers to do comprehensive monitoring to protect children. Services are provided at no cost by the 501-C-3 non-profit organization.

For further information or to make a donation, visit [www.eccac.org](http://www.eccac.org) or call 850-833-9237. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

### About the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) provides services to help identify, treat and support children in abusive situations. The organization helps prevent child abuse through education, protects child victims from future abuse, and provides resources to restore the lives of the child and the child's family. The Center is a non-profit organization located in Niceville, Fla. It serves Okaloosa and Walton counties and houses representatives from the Florida Department of Children and Families, Child Protection Team, State Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, and licensed mental health counselors. For more information or to support the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center please visit <http://www.eccac.org>. If you suspect abuse, call the Florida Abuse Hotline 1-800-96-ABUSE.

This photo accompanies email in high res...



Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's CEO Julie Hurst receives a \$23,439 donation from St. Joe Community Foundation's Executive Director, Janet Greeno. This will fund equipment for forensic interview rooms in the Center's new Walton County facility in Defuniak Springs.

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