



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Celebrates the Beginning of East Coast Migrant Head Start Project's Early Childhood Education Services in Valdosta, Georgia**

**Raleigh, North Carolina, June 14, 2021** – East Coast Migrant Head Start Project (ECMHSP) is ready to bring its successful proven model of Head Start services to the hard-working farmworker families of Valdosta, Georgia. During the week of June 14, the children of agricultural workers living in the surrounding areas of Echols and Lowndes Counties will begin to receive high-quality and comprehensive Head Start services.

These services will be at no cost for families harvesting bell peppers, blueberries, carrots, and watermelons. "During our community assessments, we identified more than 70 children in urgent need of childcare services, especially during the summer months. Now that we have been awarded this competitive expansion grant, we will work hand in hand with the community to prepare our children for school success," said Maria C. Garza, ECMHSP Chief Executive Officer.

Our ribbon cutting ceremony is on Wednesday, June 16, at the Coastal Plain Head Start, located along Ulmer Avenue. Ramona De Loera, ECMHSP Policy Council President, will be in attendance. She has been an essential farmworker for more than 20 years. "I know how difficult it is to move from state to state and not find reliable childcare. ECMHSP provides comprehensive early childhood education services. Ever since the start of COVID-19, ECMHSP has worked tirelessly to provide services to farmworker families. The recent addition of 11 Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Centers across four different states reflects that," said Ramona De Loera. Several valuable community partners will also come together to witness this memorable day for ECMHSP. The city of Valdosta has much to celebrate. When a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start location opens; it brings economic prosperity to the surrounding communities and secures our nation's food supply.

*East Coast Migrant Head Start Project was established in 1974 through a grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Under the leadership of Sister Geraldine O'Brien, Head Start centers were opened along the east coast of the United States to ensure continuity of services, as families migrated to work in agriculture. Currently, ECMHSP operates 49 Head Start Centers in 10 states.*

*Additional information about ECMHSP can be found by visiting [www.ecmhsp.org](http://www.ecmhsp.org).*

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Contact: Sandy Bornes, Executive Manager  
[sbornes@ecmhsp.org](mailto:sbornes@ecmhsp.org) or (919) 605-2781