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## Local Nonprofit School Presents the “Play It Forward” Gala Benefiting Students and Adults with Autism

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., Dec. 14, 2023 — Connections Education Center of the Palm Beaches will hold the 6th Annual Hearts & Hands Gala on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024, to raise crucial funds for specialized education and services for local students and adults with autism. The event — themed “Play It Forward” — will be held at the National Croquet Center in West Palm Beach.

This year’s gala promises to be an unforgettable evening filled with excitement, celebration and entertainment. Guests will enjoy an evening of philanthropy, fun and purpose, all while making a significant impact on the lives of local students and adults with autism.

The Hearts & Hands Gala serves as a vital fundraising event for Connections, enabling the organization to sustain its commitment to providing high-quality education, therapeutic services, vocational training and related services to individuals with autism. Connections serves a population where 85% of students live below the poverty line, 94% come from minority families, and almost 50% reside in single-parent families or with grandparents. By attending and supporting this event, guests help empower some of the most underserved members of our community.

Highlights of the evening include a delicious dinner, engaging casino-style games, live music and the opportunity to socialize with fellow impact makers who share a passion for giving all individuals the chance to develop their full potential. Attendees will also hear updates on the remarkable progress being made by Connections’ students and adult clients, showcasing the transformative impact of the school’s programs. WPTV anchor Michael Williams will serve as master of ceremonies. Special honorees will be recognized for their significant contribution to the school’s mission, including Addy van Leeuwen of Palm Beach Gardens, Melissa Carman of Riviera Beach, and Sandy James Fine Food & Productions.

Connections Executive Director and Principal Debra Johnson says, “We’re excited to invite the community to come ‘Play It Forward’ at the Hearts & Hands Gala where we’ll combine entertainment with a powerful mission. Together, we can make a lasting impact and create a brighter future for children in need.”

To learn more, reserve tickets or see sponsorship opportunities, go to [connectedpb.com/heartsandhands](https://connectedpb.com/heartsandhands).

### About Connections

Connections is a nonprofit educational center that delivers high-quality, specialized instruction to students with autism in Palm Beach County. They serve students ages 3-22 years and offer an innovative day program for adults with autism. Learn more at [connectedpb.com](https://connectedpb.com).

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