



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Amanda Elliott

amanda.elliott@siskin.org

423.648.1702

Siskin Children's Institute Announces Closing of Early Learning Centers

CHATTANOOGA, TN – After more than 70 years serving area children and their families, Siskin Children's Institute has made the difficult decision to close its early learning centers located on 1101 Carter Street and 225 Lookout Street (formerly Little Miss Mag Early Learning Center).

The Early Learning Centers will close their doors permanently effective Friday, September 29, 2023. The rising costs of operating the centers and difficulties recruiting staff were factors in this decision.

"Siskin Children's Institute has been committed to providing high quality, inclusive early education to children for many years, so the decision to close our learning centers was quite difficult and one we did not reach easily," said Derek Bullard, President & CEO. "Since the pandemic, the costs of operating the centers have increased and our enrollment never fully recovered. In addition, like many early learning centers we've experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. We arrived at this decision by weighing the cost of operating the program against our impact, the quality of the program, and our ability to fulfill our core mission."

Siskin Children's Institute has historically relied on its endowment to bridge the gap between tuition, salaries, and operational costs of the early learning centers. Many endowments were negatively impacted during the pandemic and rising inflation, plus staffing challenges in the early learning industry have significantly increased the overall cost of running the centers in recent years. The Institute serves over 5,000 children each year and of the children enrolled in the early learning centers, 26 had been diagnosed with special needs. The cost associated with operating the two centers and the associated losses ultimately impacted other programs within its mission.

"Serving children with special needs will continue to be our mission. Although the decision to close our early learning centers was incredibly difficult, it will ultimately allow us to increase our impact for children with special needs throughout the region, ensuring that we honor the legacy of the Siskin family whose vision created the Institute", said Dr. Valerie Rutledge, Siskin Children's Institute Board of Directors Chair.

The closing of the early learning centers will not affect the medical, therapy, home and community based early intervention, or family resource programs provided by Siskin Children's Institute. In addition, the institute will continue to provide medical and therapy services both in its Nashville office and throughout the region.

Bullard continued, "this change will adversely affect both parents and our employees and we are committed to help through this closure. Our goal in the next few weeks is to help identify resources for parents needing childcare and other services. Additionally, employees who remain through the transition will receive severance packages including health insurance and job placement assistance.

ABOUT SISKIN CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE

Founded in 1950 by Mose and Garrison Siskin in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Siskin Children's Institute is a non-profit organization serving Tennessee and Georgia, and achieves its mission through pediatric healthcare services, home visiting, and outreach in the field of developmental disabilities. The Institute provides developmental pediatric health care services; therapy, family support and professional development programs; and home and community-based early intervention.

For more information about the services provided at Siskin Children's Institute in your area, visit www.siskin.org.

continued

Closure of Siskin Early Learning Centers FAQ'S

Why is the Siskin Early Learning Center closing?

We serve over 5000 children with special needs each year. Of the children enrolled in our early learning centers, 26 have special needs. Yet the cost associated with operating the centers account for our most significant program losses. In years past, we have relied upon our endowment to bridge the gap between tuition, salaries, and the actual operational costs of our early learning center. Rising inflation and staffing challenges have significantly increased the overall cost of running the centers in recent years. Notably, if it were not for the support provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARPA), the early learning centers would have incurred losses exceeding \$1.5 million this year alone.

Ultimately, the decision to close our early learning centers was difficult and one we did not reach easily. However, we arrived at this decision by weighing the cost of operating the program against our impact, the quality of the program, and our ability to fulfill our core mission.

Why are you not giving more notice to parents?

Part of our plan includes providing severance and additional compensation for staff who work through the transition. However, we also know we may potentially lose staff during the transition period who will seek new opportunities. Additionally, recruiting new staff for a program that is closing would be extremely difficult, thus providing additional notice or a longer transition is not practical.

Is Siskin Children's Institute closing?

No, we will continue to serve almost 5000 children with special needs across our medical, therapy, home/community-based early intervention, and Family Voices programs.

What will happen to Little Miss Mag?

Many of the struggles encountered by Little Miss Mag were exacerbated by the pandemic. Also, Little Miss Mag did not have a significant endowment or other programs to absorb its losses or provide a path forward for growth. We are discussing the possibility of repurposing the former Little Miss Mag location to serve children with special needs through the expansion of our existing programs. We also anticipate having conversations in the near future about potential community partnerships or other ways in which we can honor the legacy of Little Miss Mag.

