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Barnes & Thornburg Racial And Social Justice Foundation Awards \$50,000 To El Campito Child Development Center In South Bend

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South Bend – The Barnes & Thornburg Racial and Social Justice Foundation has announced it awarded a \$50,000 grant to El Campito Child Development Center in South Bend. El Campito offers early childhood education, after-school programs and community-based learning to children throughout South Bend.

The grant was one of six awarded in 2022 by the foundation, which is funded by Barnes & Thornburg’s lawyers and staff, who together raised \$300,000.

El Campito has grown out of a home-based child care provider in the 1970s to aid immigrant families to become one of South Bend’s oldest nonprofit child development centers. It is the only licensed National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited bilingual child development center in Northern Indiana.

“The importance of high-quality early child education programs like El Campito in our community cannot be overstated and we are proud to be able to support this gem, which has helped jump-start so many children’s success stories,” said John Smarrella, managing partner of Barnes & Thornburg’s South Bend and Elkhart offices.

“This generous funding will be used to enhance our mission, which is to promote the educational, social, and economic success of culturally diverse children and their families. We have served low-income and Spanish-speaking families for over 50 years, and in order to continue that mission, we are working on updating our facility in order to be able to serve a higher number of families in the community to make a greater

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impact,” said Aleyna Mitchell, El Campito’s director of development and community outreach. “This area is considered a childcare desert, meaning we have more children than available enrollments. We are so thankful for this gift to get us on the road of achieving our vision.”

El Campito serves approximately 75 students each year with programs focused on active learning based on solid development principles to foster physical, emotional, social, and intellectual capacities in all children.

“It is heartwarming to watch the foundation’s grants be put to work in such powerful ways by organizations like El Campito Child Development Center,” said Connie Lahn, partner at Barnes & Thornburg and president of the foundation’s board of directors. “We are pleased to be able to support early childhood education, which is so important to maintaining solid families, neighborhoods, communities and businesses.”

The Barnes & Thornburg Racial and Social Justice Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, was established in 2020 with financial support coming entirely through personal donations from the lawyers and staff in each of the firm’s offices. The foundation is committed to action by raising awareness, dedicating resources, and advocating for equal opportunities and justice for people of color.

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