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**Community-wide celebration for St. Lucie Public Schools**

**Port St. Lucie/July 18, 2017 --** State Representative Larry Lee Jr. (D-Fort Pierce) and local business and community leaders are throwing a party to celebrate the significant accomplishments made by the St. Lucie Public Schools (SLPS). The efforts of the school district’s teachers, administrators and staff will be applauded on August 4 at 5 p.m. at the Mets First Data Field in Port St. Lucie, ahead of the 6:30 p.m. baseball game.

“We want to show all the school district employees – teachers, cafeteria workers, office staff, bus drivers, janitors, administrators – how much they are appreciated,” said Lee. “As a former teacher, I know the job they are tasked with. Our local businesses and government leaders are celebrating the school district’s success.”

More than half of the district’s schools achieved an increase in school grades, while the district grade jumped to a B — the second highest district on the Treasure Coast in total points earned, according to reports recently released by the Florida Department of Education.   Graduation rates have jumped to 86.8 percent, bringing SLPS from 45th place all the way up to 13th place in the state, and industry certifications increased 102 percent.

“The data continues telling a positive story about the academic growth taking place in our classrooms across the district,” said Superintendent E. Wayne Gent.  “Our teachers, our administrators, our support staff, our bus drivers — everyone, absolutely everyone, is putting forth the effort to support our children to make a positive difference in their lives.”

“This will be a giant pep rally,” said Lee, who is also a former professional football player and a football coach. “The school district is getting ready once again for the big game – this coming school year.”

The celebration is sponsored by Florida Power & Light, WastePro, the Lighthouse Foundation, Larry Lee Jr. State Farm Agency, the St. Lucie Mets, Big Apple Pizza, the Van Duzer Foundation, Peter W.  Busch Foundation, St. Lucie County, the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC). Lee said that $7,500 had been raised in less than two days, most from local businesses, so that every district employee could be invited to attend with free admission, a hot dog and a soft drink.

All St. Lucie Public Schools employees will receive two free admissions to the event and the game, with their district identification. “We also want to invite students, parents, local businesses and everyone in our community join this celebration,” said EDC President Peter Tesch. “Quality schools are the building blocks of a dynamic economy. When the schools succeed, we all succeed.”

School employees are asked to arrive between 4-5 p.m. Local businesses will have booths located throughout the stadium, offering giveaways and chances to win raffle prizes. Students, parents and other members of the public will be admitted to the stadium after 5 p.m., as space is available, with the purchase of a ticket to the evening’s game against the Tampa Yankees.

The recently released school grades reflect ongoing student learning gains, climbing graduation rates and upward assessment trends for SLPS.  The district’s A-rated schools include Fairlawn Elementary, Lincoln Park Academy, West Gate K-8 and Mosaic Upper School. Seventeen schools received B grades. Area high schools continued their climb with three high schools growing B grades (Port St. Lucie High School, St. Lucie West Centennial High School and Treasure Coast High School). C.A. Moore Elementary and Mariposa Elementary both shot up two letter grades, and no school is rated as a failing school.

“We celebrate these successes, but by no means have we plateaued.  We have high expectations for all students, and we will continue supporting them to be their very best,” said Gent.

For more information about school grades, visit http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/.

**About St. Lucie Public Schools**

The mission of St. Lucie Public Schools is to ensure all students graduate from safe and caring schools equipped with the knowledge, skills and desire to succeed. For more information visit, http://www.stlucieschools.org.

**About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County**

The EDC is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County’s economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.336.6250 or http://www.youredc.com.