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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Jon Prince honored with Pete Hegener Leadership Award



*Jon Prince, St. Lucie Public Schools superintendent, was presented with the prestigious Pete Hegener Leadership Award April 30.
Photo by MaryAnn Ketcham*

Port St. Lucie/May 1, 2026 – Jon Prince, PhD, superintendent of St. Lucie Public Schools, was honored with the prestigious Pete Hegener Leadership Award by the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) at its 12th annual leadership dinner on April 30.

The award is presented each year to a dedicated business leader who has made significant contributions to St. Lucie County's economy and quality of life. The annual dinner and celebration, held at the Harbour Ridge Yacht & Country Club and attended by 200 business leaders, was sponsored by Bank of America.

Dean Mead attorney Lee Dobbins, the 11th annual recipient, and Bank of America's Tammy Matthew presented the award to Prince.

In 2025, under Prince's leadership, St. Lucie Public Schools earned its first "A" district rating, placing SLPS in the top third of all Florida districts. The importance of this achievement cannot be underestimated as companies, investors and families use school ratings as a primary factor in relocation decisions, noted EDC President Wes McCurry. Prince is also fundamentally reshaping the talent pipeline for St. Lucie County by intentionally building bridges between education and economic development, and, as superintendent, Prince is responsible for nearly 6,000 employees whose salaries fuel the county's economic engine.

"Dr. Prince works tirelessly to ensure every family, regardless of income, background, or neighborhood, feels valued, informed, and included in the district's success. His work reflects a deep belief that public education is both the genius of our democracy and the heart of a thriving community, and that strong schools are essential to economic prosperity and quality of life," read the nomination submitted for Prince.

"His bold initiatives have strengthened St. Lucie County's workforce pipeline, elevated the district to historic academic success, and deepened collaboration across business, civic, and nonprofit sectors," read his nomination, in part. "Dr. Prince leads with integrity, courage, and an unwavering commitment to children and families, transforming public education into a driving force for opportunity, prosperity, and community pride. His leadership has not only reshaped St. Lucie Public Schools but has strengthened the economic and social fabric of the entire county, making him an exceptional and deserving nominee for this award."

The ten members of the 2026 EDC Hegener Award selection committee chose Prince as the person who best embodies the leadership and vision of the award's namesake, Pete Hegener, from a field of 12 nominees, including five other semifinalists: Michael Ansorge, CEO of OCULUS Surgical; Azlina Goldstein, vice president of entitlements at GL Homes/Riverland; Kyle Greene, president of Kyle G's Restaurants; Brandon Nobile, CEO of Remnant Construction; and Scott Van Duzer, owner of Big Apple Pizza and principal of the Van Duzer Foundation.

Recent Hegener Award recipients include the late Bud Adams of Adams Ranch; Ken Pruitt, former Florida Senate president and former St. Lucie County property appraiser; Tammy Roncaglione, CenterState Bank community president; Russ Blackburn, former Port St. Lucie city manager; and Richard Tambone, Tambone Companies.

In addition to Bank of America's presenting sponsorship, leadership dinner award sponsors included Cleveland Clinic; GL Homes; Ashley Capital; Dean, Mead, Minton & Moore; Remnant Construction; Tambone Companies; BBL Hospitality; Hi-Tide Boat Lifts; Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors®; St. Lucie Public Schools; Verdex Construction; Bowman Consulting; CORE Construction; Cushman & Wakefield; HBK CPAs & Consultants; Indian River State College; KEITH; Lightbridge Academy; Treasure Coast Hospice; OCULUS Surgical and Seacoast Bank.

About the award

The recipient of the Pete Hegener Leadership Award exemplifies the qualities of a visionary, a trusted role model and leader whose inspiration and achievements impact the quality of job creation, economic vitality and business growth.

Pete Hegener, the man whose actions inspired this award, was a founding member and integral partner of the EDC, served on the Board of Directors, and was an Executive Committee member. Pete was a pillar of the St. Lucie County community, having played a key role in the development of western St. Lucie County and Tradition. Friends and colleagues described him as "honest, visionary, and caring." He passed away in March 2012, but his legacy is recognized through this award.

About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (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 772.324.2014, contact@youredc.com or www.youredc.com.