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PAXTON CAMPUS CELEBRATES INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK IN LOUDOUN COUNTY

Leesburg, Virginia – December 7, 2015 – Paxton Campus celebrates Inclusive Schools Week this week, and inclusion for all, by awarding nine different Loudoun County Public Schools BUDDY BENCHES to be installed on their schools' playgrounds.

The Buddy Bench is a way to foster friendship and eliminate children being lonely on the playground. The way the Buddy Bench works is that if a child is looking for someone to play with they can sit on the bench, which signals the other students to come over and invite them to join in and play. It's a great way to teach kindness and inclusion.

"We were happily surprised by the creativity of the applications from the nine schools around the county that applied for Buddy Benches, and we are thrilled that we are funding all nine Buddy Benches, as inclusion is so important to us, here at Paxton Campus," says Melissa Heifetz, Director of Advocacy at the ALLY Advocacy Center on Paxton Campus.

The nine schools that will receive their Buddy Benches in mid- to late-January are: Trailside Middle School; Horizon Elementary; Algonkian Elementary; Sycolin Creek Elementary; Round Hill Elementary; Dominion Trail Elementary; Banneker Elementary; Aldie Elementary; and Newton Lee Elementary.

Joyce Shanholtzer, the Guidance Counselor at Banneker Elementary and Aldie Elementary, helped her students apply for Buddy Benches, "We wanted to make sure that all of our kids get to enjoy the playground, get to play with each other, and we have such great kids that always want to include other kids that we thought that the Buddy Bench would be a great signal to say that, hey – somebody needs a friend today."

The Buddy Bench initiative is part of a larger advocacy created by the "A Life Like Yours" ALLY Advocacy Center on Paxton Campus, to spread awareness that ALL kids belong and can be included.

In 1967, a group of parents whose children had special needs formed The Arc of Loudoun, a non-profit to start a school for their children when no one else would. In 2010, those two visions combined when The Arc of Loudoun moved to the Paxton Campus. Since then, the Campus has grown into a full-service organization to provide an integrated and innovative learning environment for all ages and abilities. Programs include Open Door Learning Center, The Aurora School, STEP Up vocational training program for adults, and ALLY ("A Life Like Yours") Advocacy Center, all devoted to serving people with disabilities and their families, as well as helping children of all abilities thrive in our community.

For more information, visit www.paxtoncampus.org or contact Rachel Roseberry, Communications Coordinator of Paxton Campus, at rroseberry@paxtoncampus.org or by phone at 703.777.1939.