



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Andy Heller
810-399-4997/aheller@ecic4kids.org

Lansing, Grand Rapids TV personalities to co-host Sandbox Party Convention

*Lansing's Jason Colthorp and Grand Rapids' Maranda emcee
Aug. 26 event in support of early childhood programs*

LANSING – Jason Colthorp, news anchor for WILX TV 10 in Lansing, and Maranda, host of WOOD TV 8's "Where You Live" show in Grand Rapids, will co-host the first-ever Sandbox Party Convention Aug. 26 at Michigan State University's Breslin Center.

The nonpartisan, nonpolitical convention runs from 1-4 p.m. and is designed to focus attention on the need to maintain funding for early childhood efforts in Michigan. Parents are encouraged to bring their children to the free event, which will feature speakers, inspirational videos and family-friendly entertainment, including The Verve Pipe.

A growing body of research indicates that focusing on getting children off to a great start from birth to age 5 pays huge economic benefits. It reduces special education, welfare and criminal justice costs, while increasing the number of children who grown into productive adults.

"I'm thrilled to be involved with the Sandbox Party because preparing our kids for tomorrow is the most important job we have as parents," said Colthorp, 36, the father of two daughters. "But this important work can be fun, too, and the convention is shooting for just that kind of mix. When I'm not doing the news, I'm just a big kid myself."

Colthorp began his career at WILX in 2000. Two years later he was named weekday morning news anchor. In 2005 he was promoted to evening anchor of the WILX-produced newscasts at 5:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. on FOX 47 In 2008 he began anchoring the 11 p.m. newscast on Channel 10 with Adela Uchida.

Maranda is the host of “Where You Live,” a popular weekly half-hour show featuring a combination of information, inspiration and insights for West Michigan parents.

She is the recipient of three Gracie Allen Awards, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Women in Radio and Television West Michigan Chapter, an Emmy nomination and the Hope College Distinguished Alumni Award.

Radio Disney AM 910, part of the No. 1 radio network for kids, tweens, and families, will be on hand at the convention with six “activity stations” including the Rockin’ Roundup - D-Tour Show, Prize Bubble, Sandbox Treasure Hunt and more. The Radio Disney Road Crew will rock the house with live entertainment.

The event also will feature a performance by the popular rock group The Verve Pipe playing songs from “A Family Album,” featuring family-oriented songs with fun, inventive lyrics set to the band’s memorable melodies.

Also on the entertainment docket are exhibits geared toward parents, children and educators, - including Potter Park Zoo, Mad Science of Greater Kalamazoo, Grandparents Teach, Too and Michigan Oral Health Coalitions - as well as roaming mascots, door prizes and more.

While lively and fun, there’s a serious side to the convention, as well – the well-being of Michigan’s youngest learners.

Michigan’s gubernatorial candidates – Republican Rick Snyder and Democrat Virg Bernero – have been invited to bring their families and address convention-goers.

“Michigan’s economic future will be determined by the resources the state puts into its young children today,” said Judy Y. Samelson, CEO of the Early Childhood Investment Corp. (ECIC), a nonprofit public corporation that is implementing a comprehensive early childhood system in Michigan.

“We plan to fire up the troops to send home the message that all aspects of early childhood – from physical and emotional health to quality child care and prekindergarten – are crucial to Michigan’s next generation.”

For more information about the convention or to join the Sandbox Party, visit www.michigansandboxparty.com.