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**Els for Autism® New Building Puts Autism Services On The World Stage**

JUPITER, FL – Ernie Els’ name may be synonymous with the game of golf, but to thousands of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families worldwide, he is a hero. On April 4, the World of Golf Hall of Famer and four-time major champion, his wife, Liezl, and co-founder publishing icon Marvin R. Shanken brought the sprawling 26-acre Els Center of Excellence® full circle with the groundbreaking of their newest offering, the Stoops Family Foundation Adult Services building. Els for Autism Foundation® is headquartered on the campus which serves as the epicenter of the organization’s vision to influence autism acceptance and inclusion worldwide.

The Els moved from England to Jupiter, Florida a decade ago in search of services for their son, Ben, who had been diagnosed with autism. What they found was excellent services, but scattered and difficult to find. As a result, the Els teamed with Shanken and created a massive campus that offers every service from early diagnosis through the school years, and on through adulthood – the full life span. It is a one-of-a-kind eco-system of services for those on the autism spectrum and their families. Els for Autism has foundations in three other countries: Canada, South Africa and United Kingdom.

The Els Center of Excellence is a state-of-the-art destination for families around the world supporting the Foundation’s mission to better understand the aspirations of people with autism and to help them fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives. But, it is much more than a single, physical location. Through telehealth, conferences, virtual events, shared programs, and multi-language webinars, the Foundation has a much broader national and global reach.

The new 21,000-square-foot, $7.1 million adult services building will be completed in 2023, providing a dedicated space for the Foundation’s existing adult programs that are expanding and in high demand. A full-service café will be at the heart of the building, and Els for Autism is looking to partner with an organization in hospitality, food-service and/or catering to operate the space. The café will be outfitted with both a drive-through window and dining area to offer a moment of respite for families and staff. Through this space, adults with autism will receive training and education in the areas of food service and hospitality.

The two-level building will also be home to the Foundation’s Adult Day Training Program, Work Experience Program, Vocational and Life Skills training, mental health support, and a place from which employers can receive the evidence-based tools necessary to initiate a neurodiverse workforce within their own organization. The building meets the needs of individuals with autism entering adulthood for whom at the age of 22, age out of many services previously available to them.

Each building on the campus was purpose-built to meet the needs of individuals with autism providing support from diagnosis, to school-age years, and throughout adulthood. The strategic plan for the campus expansion includes capital fundraising to build a medical research facility, gymnasium and aquatic center, cafeteria and athletic fields.

**Els for Autism Foundation®**

The Els for Autism Foundation was established in 2009 by PGA TOUR golfer Ernie Els and his wife Liezl (residents of North Palm Beach, FL) shortly after their son, Ben, was diagnosed with autism. The Foundation’s overarching mission is to help people on the autism spectrum fulfil their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives. Els for Autism has offices in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, and the UK. To help fulfil its mission, Els for Autism is developing a state-of-the-art Center of Excellence in Jupiter, FL, with a local, national and global reach.

**The Els Center of Excellence**

The Els Center of Excellence is a world-class facility hosting leading-edge programs and services for people on the autism spectrum and their families. The campus contains thoughtfully planned spaces designed to meet the specific needs of individuals with autism—from a possible early diagnosis, to their school-aged years, and throughout adulthood. The Center hosts two, non-profit, tuition-free Palm Beach County charter schools that serve students with autism using evidence-based practices. The Rupert Education Wing hosts The Learning Center at The Els Center of Excellence, serving students with autism ages 3-14 (thelearningcenter.org) and the Shanken Education Wing hosts The Learning Academy at The Els Center of Excellence, serving students with autism ages 14-21.