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## **Redwood First in Country to Receive NSACA Accreditation for Serving School-Agers with Disabilities**

(Ft. Mitchell) – Monday, May 13, Redwood Rehabilitation Center’s School Age Services became the first after school program for children with disabilities in the United States to be accredited by the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA).

Working toward national accreditation has been a major focus for Redwood’s Children’s Services for the past year.

“We are very excited to be the first after school program for children with special needs in the entire country to be NSACA accredited,” said Nancy House Director of Children’s Services. “We’ve established Redwood as a bench mark and we hope to encourage other organizations seeking accreditation to include school-agers with disabilities in their after school programming. This is an honor, a privilege, and a responsibility.”

NSACA accreditation sets quality standards for School Age Care based on research in education, psychology, health and child development. NSACA standards specify practice procedures in the areas of human relationships, indoor and outdoor environments, activities, safety, health, nutrition, and program management.

“It is important for us to earn accreditation,” said Katrina Murphy, School Age Services Coordinator. “This helps show the students we serve, their families, and the community that quality school age care is the same for youth with disabilities as for those with more typical development.”

Both Redwood and NSACA faced the challenge of conducting the nations first-ever evaluation of programming designed specifically for children with disabilities.

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“The evaluation was a challenge,” said House. “We had to demonstrate to the NSACA endorsers that we are meeting the individual needs of children with delayed development while complying with rigorous standards for age appropriate practice.”

NSACA evaluates school age programs ages 5-14 and Redwood stretches to serve students with disabilities ages 5-21 years old. The keys to Redwood’s quality balance lie in redirecting student behavior, teaching social skills, and encouraging independence in self-care.

Working toward accreditation required a group of parents, public school teachers and Redwood staff to look at the program from the student’s point of view.

“Going through the process opened our eyes to the importance of community involvement for our youth and showed us we really do make a difference in the lives of young people,” said Murphy. “With the help of a great group of individuals we followed NSACA’s criteria and implemented changes that really have made a difference.”

As part of its accreditation notification, Redwood received acknowledgement by NSACA of the programs particular strengths. Redwood strengths include a well-trained staff who demonstrate outstanding human relationships and who work to maximize the achievements of individual children. The program was also congratulated on its effective balance, programmatic structure and student choice.

Each year Redwood Rehabilitation Center serves nearly 600 children and adults with disabilities through a variety of educational, therapeutic and vocational programs. Redwood welcomes anyone to tour the Ft. Mitchell facility and see the school age program in action, after school between 3:30 and 5:30 pm.

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