

# CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

Summer ,2016

## Smart Start At Work Here!

On July 1, 2016, Craven Smart Start began its 18th year of operation! This marks the beginning of a new generation. Children who participated in our program in the early years may have graduated from high school or soon will. They may soon be parents and they likely will be looking for child care or children's services. We want this generation of parents to know that Craven Smart Start is still here for them....this time as parents.

So how has our program changed in 18 years? Some changes quickly come to mind. Our name-Craven County Partnership for Children became Craven Smart Start. Our location is now at 2111F Neuse Boulevard in New Bern—but we still work throughout Craven County. The mission, vision and administrative structure of the program is the same, but our programs have changed somewhat—the locally created programs have gone away as the General Assembly has required programs to be evidenced-based. But our initial programs, CCR&R, Craven DSS, Craven County Schools still operate Smart Start-funded programs. Our program has increased fundraising efforts and pursued grants as the state mandated match has increased from 10% to 19%. But our commitment to Craven 's youngest citizens and their families—to help them be healthy and ready to succeed has not changed; it's still our passion after 18 years.

Mission of Craven Smart Start: To ensure that every child, birth to five, in Craven County receives the education, health and family support necessary to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.



Children at Child Care Network #77 enjoy a Raising A Reader activity

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## Advancing Child Health..

By working to improve outcomes for children, Smart Start strives to improve the health and safety of young children and to prevent childhood obesity. In Craven County, these efforts are led by Craven Smart Start's Child Care Health Consultant, Terri Walls, RN.

On April 6, 2016, Terri was awarded the 2016 Child Care Health Consultant Achievement Award at the Annual Conference of the North Carolina Child Care Health Consultant Association, held in Chapel Hill. Terri was recognized for providing a collaborative approach in improving the health and safety outcomes of child care facilities in Craven County. She was also recognized for her leadership at the state and regional level, having served as both Regional Rep. and President for NC CCHCA.

Congratulations Terri! Your award is much deserved.

## Raising Child Care Quality .....

Raising the quality of child care is a top priority of our partnership and that assignment is carried out by our Quality Enhancement (QE) Coordinators, Letha Ricks and Liz Tuttle. Working in conjunction with our Child Care Health Consultant Terri Walls, RN, they provide countless hours of technical assistance and training to Craven County child care providers, helping them to raise their level of care as assessed through the North Carolina star-rated licensing system. Their efforts have certainly had an impact, as more child care providers are attaining and maintaining their higher stars.

During the past year, the QE coordinators have taken on an additional role, that of implementing a 12-month project they envisioned that promotes acceptance of diversity in early childhood programs in Craven County. Why is this important? According to Letha Ricks, "Intentional interactions and materials that promote the acceptance of diversity should be present in every learning environment for young children. Together, they help children feel accepted. By creating this environment of acceptance, children are encouraged to celebrate the similarities that bind us together rather than focusing on our differences."

This project was funded through a grant from the Harold H. Bate Foundation, announced last fall. All state licensed child care providers in Craven County were invited to take part; ten child care centers and eight family child care homes applied for and participated in the project, for a total of 39 staff participants. By participating in the project, these providers received training and materials focused on promoting acceptance of diversity, as well as technical assistance in implementing a self-assessment of the learning environment. Most importantly, the 626 children enrolled in the participating facilities have benefited from the grant with its emphasis on "an environment of acceptance".



**Terri Walls Receives State CCHC Award**

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Cove City Library staff Jewel Smith and Nancy Chase with CCR&R Director Rachel Ward display books provided by CCR&R. to enhance the Library's Lending Library area.

## Promoting Early Literacy....

Recognizing that a majority of language development occurs in the first five years of life, Smart Start provides programs that develop early literacy skills needed to succeed in school, work, and life.

The evidenced-based early literacy program, Raising A Reader (RAR), funded by Craven Smart Start this year, has proven to be very successful in lots of ways. As one RAR parent said, "It's an awesome program. It got my child interested in reading." The 54 children who participated in RAR benefited by having teachers and parents trained in interactive read-aloud techniques, by being exposed to over 100 award-winning books and by having their parents read to them daily. As a reward for their participation, each child and their family received their own "blue bag" full of books to keep. The centers that participated this year, Little Blessings and Child Care Network #77, received RAR training and strengthened their relationships with their families. Craven Smart Start, under RAR Coordinator Nadia Lowe, and the libraries (the Havelock Library and the New Bern Library) that partnered with RAR in reading events benefited by working together to form an early literacy partnership.

And speaking of libraries, our Child Care Resource and Referral program provided books and literacy materials to the Cove City Library and the Havelock Library in June to enhance their lending library areas. Initially established as a collaboration between each library and CCR&R, the lending libraries were funded through a grant that CCR&R obtained from the Harold H. Bate Foundation in 2013.

## Strengthening Families ...

Science tells us that children who have positive relationships with their parents have better health and social skills. All of our programs do provide activities that strengthen families. A good example is our weekly Play and Learn program operated by CCR&R and overseen by Cali Broughton and Bianca Chacon. These sessions, which are designed for the child and a parent or caregiver, utilize the Kindermusik curriculum as well as early learning activities focused on music, art and literacy with a snack. Play and Learn has been very well received by parents, grandparents and nannies...and their children.

While focusing on families, let us not forget our Smart Start family. Many thanks to our staff for going "above and beyond" in their work at Craven Smart Start and to our board members for their support and guidance over the years. We especially want to recognize board members, Amy Bryant, Stephanie Duncan, Betty Hamby, Mike McCoy and Dr. Jean Huryn, who recently rolled off the board. Also, we want to express appreciation to our service providers, the Smart Start-funded community agencies that provide the services to children and families, for all they do.

Join with Craven Smart Start and become an advocate for Craven County children to help them to get the best possible start in life.

**Craven Smart Start is a 501(c)3. Donations are tax-deductible.**

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information or questions about our services and programs.

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## Up-dates about Craven Smart Start with Photos on Page 5

- **Top Left:** Little Blessings Child Care held their preschool graduation in May. We were invited to attend to share information with parents. Here the four year-olds and the marshalls gather before entering the sanctuary for their graduation ceremony. The children are also "grads" of Raising A Reader.
- **Top Right:** CCR&R took the weekly Play & Learn group of parents and children to Glenburnie Park for outdoor play and activities in early June. Other outdoor activities this spring included an Easter egg hunt and planting a pinwheel garden in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- **Center Left:** CCR&R Director Rachel Ward presents Havelock Public Library staff with children's books and educational materials to enhance their Lending Library area, which is a collaboration between the library and CCR&R.
- **Center Right:** According to five year old Egypt, our Lending Library at Craven Smart Start is "two thumbs up". Egypt, here with her mom, has attended Ms. Jackie's Place in Vanceboro, since she was two years old, Egypt says she wants to be a child care provider when she grows up...just like Ms. Jackie!
- **Bottom Left:** Nadia Lowe, RAR Coordinator, Booker Bear and New Bern Children's Librarian Pam Jenkins hold a Blue Bag, which each child in RAR received in a ceremony at the New Bern Library in May.
- **Bottom Right:** In June, we held a Zaxby's Fundraiser Night, Matt and Christy Montanye and their children were among those who attended. Christy is our Finance Manager. Thanks to all who attended.

