

# CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

Third Issue FY 2019-2020

## Our Unsung Heroes in a COVID-19 World

These are difficult and challenging times. We have faced difficult and challenging times before, but this time is different. We practice social distancing and obey stay-at-home orders to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Like other programs, our office is closed to the public and our staff telework from home, handling duties by phone and internet. For Craven Smart Start, these adjustments have not changed our will or determination to do all we can to help Craven County families and the early care educators, who care for our young children and who provide them with a foundation for early learning and development. We take this opportunity to recognize them for the important role they play, especially now. It seems that the importance of their role has not been generally acknowledged.

However, during Governor Cooper's press conference on April 7th, Dr. Mandy Cohen, the Director of NCDHHS, stated, "We are able to provide this support (emergency child care subsidy program) for our frontline workers because of another group of essential workers, our early childhood teachers and staff. In the best of times, they are our unsung heroes, who care for, love and teach our children. They are literally brain builders, supporting children's healthy development so they have a strong foundation for health and learning, and that's in the best of times. So as we face this pandemic, we know our early childhood workforce is a support system that allows our essential services to be there for all of us."

In this issue we will look back at our collaboration with Save the Children and will share our unsung heroes comments about its impact and will feature some other Smart Start activities from the past quarter. Enjoy!

## Mission of Craven Smart Start:

Building Brighter Futures for Young Children



Excel VII was officially presented the Traveling Trophy for the child care center with the largest number of runners at Craven Smart Start's Holiday Hustle held on December 14th.

## In This Issue

- Our Unsung Heroes in a COVID-19 World
- Save the Children Grant Helps Providers
- Thank you Save the Children from Providers
- Community Support Needed
- Thank you Save the Children— From Providers



Contents from the family child care home of Paula Jones lay in the yard after the home was flooded on September 14, 2018. See her comments on the right .

## Save the Children Grant Helps Providers!

For the past year (from February, 2019 to February, 2020) Craven Smart Start staff, with a **\$200,000 grant awarded by Save the Children**, have worked tirelessly to help state licensed child care facilities in our county to recover from Hurricane Florence. Grant funds were used to help fifty-five child care facilities, both centers and family child care homes, recover by providing reimbursement and materials assistance for items lost or damaged by the hurricane, including indoor and outdoor materials, office materials, gross motor materials, manipulatives, literacy materials and mulch, required for child care playgrounds.

So how did this occur? Shortly after Hurricane Florence battered our county on September 14, 2018, Child Care Resource and Referral staff of Craven Smart Start immediately went to work assessing the damage to state licensed child care facilities in the six counties of Region 2 (Craven, Pamlico, Beaufort, Hyde, Washington and Tyrell counties). While no substantial damage in five of the counties, facilities in Craven County sustained significant damage. Of the 300 businesses in Craven County impacted by the hurricane, 59 were child care facilities serving working families, with 2,010 children from birth to 12 years of age and 366 center teachers and directors and family child care home providers. Many facilities were temporarily unable to operate. Some closed and did not re-open.

Craven Smart Start was visited by staff from Save the Children on September 26, 2018. They came with materials for impacted child care facilities and with the possibility of funds to help our child care programs recover from the damage. Save the Children called a few days later and talked about additional materials support, trainings and potential funding. According to Pat Morrow, Executive Director, "We were elated when Save the Children awarded Craven Smart Start a \$200,000 grant to support the recovery of our child care facilities. Without the generous funds provided by Save the Children, many of our child care facilities would still be in recovery mode or worse yet, permanently closed. Providing monetary reimbursement and materials assistance for items that had been lost or damaged by Hurricane Florence aided our child care facilities to recover and the ability to resume services to children, families and their teachers."

## Thank You Save the Children - from Child Care Providers

In 2018, I was displaced for six months due to the devastation of Hurricane Florence. My home and family child care home operation was flooded. I am so very glad for all that Save the Children (through the efforts and support of Craven Smart Start) has done for my day care.—Paula Jones, A Touch of Love Family CC Home, New Bern

"The Save the Children grant impacted our facility in so many ways. Without this grant, many of our classrooms would lack what they needed to create a creative outlet for learning. We have been able to rotate materials to give children more of a variety in centers, children have been able to do more active learning in circle and outside time has been a blast with new playground toys. It's been a pleasure to see the smiles on children's faces. Thank you so much for the grant!" - Barbara Gibson, Godette Child Development Center, Havelock



This youngster who attends Excel VI in Havelock enjoys a trike that came through the Save the Children grant.

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Children from Excel 1 join the Cat in the Hat for a photo opp. Children learned about STEM materials and their parents participated in a Raising A Reader workshop at the center.

## Community Support Needed—by Pat Morrow

Below are portions of a letter recently written to the media by Executive Director Pat Morrow. We are pleased to share it with you.

“As our nation faces the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of child care has never been more evident and these caregivers and providers have never been more indispensable. We cannot fight this pandemic without ensuring that the essential workforce can access safe, high-quality child care ([homegrownchildcare.org](http://homegrownchildcare.org)) .

This dedicated, reliable workforce is there to serve the community and support fellow essential workers, even as they have identified needs that are arising as a result of staying open during the Coronavirus COVID19 pandemic. We understand that in each community, the most sought-after items are incredibly difficult to access. Like our medical workers and others serving on the front lines, there is a critical need for masks, sanitizer, cleaners, paper products, baby wipes, etc. We implore the community to step up and help with these items, where they can.

Without these Essential Child Care Professionals, especially at this time of COVID -19 crisis, those who are working hard to meet the needs of the population would be unable to deliver needed critical services to the community. The child care community must have the vital resources necessary to be successful in protecting our most precious asset...the children.

## Thank You to Save the Children— More from Providers

The grant replaced our outside shed that was flooded during Hurricane Florence. We also received toys for the children. The kids love the new trikes.—Wendy Ward, Preschool, J.T. Barber Elementary New Bern

Our outdoor play space has been enhanced by the equipment furnished by the grant. Children are developing and refining gross motor skills, eye-hand coordination, spatial relation and cooperative play skills. We appreciate the work that Craven Smart Start undertook to acquire this funding for Family Literacy.—Renee' Harrell, Craven County Family Literacy, Vanceboro and Cove City

Along with the generous reimbursement for repairs, the program was greatly beneficial because a tree took out all of my outdoor materials.—Sophia Richards, Ms. Sophia's Home Child Care, Havelock

Receiving the toys for our children's playground was awesome. Playgrounds are often overlooked! With toys becoming weathered and also normal wear and tear, these toys have been a major asset to our playgrounds! The children are having a lot of fun with the things provided. We are very appreciative.—Sherry Wheeler, Child Care Network #74, Havelock

Editor's Note: These are just a few of the thank you's we received...we did not have space to include all, but each one was much appreciated

**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: A Big Thank You to Letha Ricks, who took on the assignment of facilitating the Save the Children grant, from beginning to end. Here she receives a riding toy that will be delivered to a child care facility that lost outdoor play equipment because of Hurricane Florence. Congratulations to Letha, who retired from Craven Smart Start in February.
- Top Right: Children at F. R. Danyus Head Start, who participate in Raising A Reader (RAR), learn how to use the STEM materials, with Nadia Lowe's help. The STEM materials were provided to RAR by a grant from the Bosch Community Fund.
- Center Left & Right: Reading Fun Day, held on February 1st at the New Bern, provided area children with lots of literacy activities throughout the Mall. In the preschool literacy area, Kelly Shaw introduced children to games and books from our Lending Library in a floor activity. Craven County Family Literacy also offered activities and information about their program.
- Bottom Left. & Right: Pat Morrow, Craven Smart Start Executive Director and Jean Kenefick, Craven Smart Start Board Member registered children for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, while Cardboard Dolly Parton looks on! Students of the Early Childhood Education Program at Craven Community College and Instructor, Dr. Terri Colon, were also on hand to provide activities for youngsters and their parents.

