

CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

Third Issue FY 2020- 2021

Lessons Learned during the Pandemic

On March 16, 2020, Craven Smart Start closed its office and lending library to the public and in-house staff began teleworking. Our staff had no idea of when we would be back in the office or how it would impact us as employees. A year later, we are in a transition: the office is not open yet to the public and most staff still telework, but some staff have begun to work a few days each week in the office. A year later, we are reflecting on the lessons we have learned from living in a pandemic. Here are few thoughts:

The pandemic taught us to accept what we cannot change. We couldn't change the virus, but we could listen to the scientists and follow their advice. Our staff did and everyone stayed healthy.

The pandemic brought out the best in our staff. Working from home was a new experience for the staff, but they persevered and soon learned new ways to send reports and participate in staff meetings, etc. Likewise, staff were resourceful and resilient and were able to adapt technology for child care trainings and special events, like the virtual early childhood conference, and our annual virtual Holiday Hustle race fundraiser.

The pandemic helped to make us more appreciative of our front-line workers and of the jobs they do for others. We've always had great appreciation for our child care workforce, but the pandemic heightened our regard for them and the role they played in caring for the children of other frontline workers. Early educators have been on the frontline from day one of the pandemic. They are "the workforce behind the workforce".

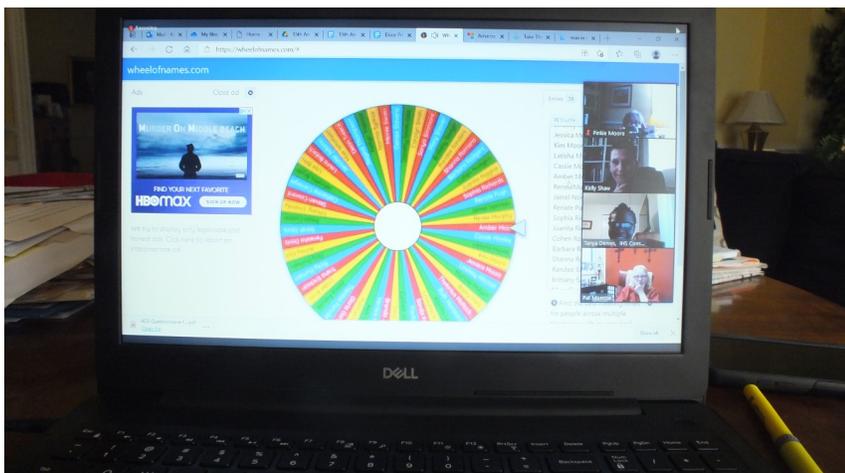
In this issue, read about the challenges facing the child care workforce, Craven Smart Start's Advocacy Committee and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Mission of Craven Smart Start:

Building Brighter Futures for Young Children

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Our Annual Building Brighter Futures Conference, held on March 20th, was virtual. Presentations and drawings for door prizes (seen on the screen above) were done via the internet.



Craven Smart Start delivered these signs to each child care center and family child care home in May, 2020 in recognition of Child Care Provider Appreciation Day.

April Is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Craven Smart Start and the NC Guardian ad Litem program have teamed up to develop a Child Abuse Prevention Committee to observe Child Abuse Prevention Month in Craven County during April. The committee also includes representatives from the Craven / Pamlico Children’s Advocacy Center and the Craven County Department of Social Services.

The goal of the committee is to promote the month-long observance of Child Abuse Prevention through virtual methods, media contacts and the creation of pinwheel gardens throughout the county. The committee kicked off the month on April 1st, by promoting “Wear Blue Day” and posting photos on social media.

For information about the Child Abuse Prevention Committee, contact Pinkie Moore, Community Outreach Coordinator, at pmoore@cravensmartstart.org or call her at (252) 671-0689.

NEEC Worthy Wages for Early Care Educators!

In 2019, the Child Care Services Association conducted an extensive study of North Carolina’s Early Education Workforce. Here is a summary:

- Child care teachers make an average of \$12.00 @ hour for annual salary of less than \$25,000.
- 62% of teachers have at least an associate’s degree.
- 1 in 5 teachers has no health insurance in the middle of a pandemic.
- 38% of teachers relied on some form of public assistance in the last three years. Child care teachers are seven times more likely to live in poverty than public school kindergarten teachers.
- Twenty-two % of child care teachers have indicated they expect to leave child care employment within the next three years.

Young children need experienced, well-educated teachers with whom they can form close attachments to support their healthy development and early learning. Yet, North Carolina is facing a child care workforce crisis, with fewer people entering the early childhood field and qualified teachers leaving the field at high rates. The reason cited: low compensation & wages are not commensurate with their education and experience. The current child care financing system is broken: parents can’t afford to pay more; child care programs can’t afford to pay their teachers more; and early education teachers can’t afford to stay for low wages. For the North Carolina Early Education Coalition, it is clearer than ever that child care is essential to our economic recovery. Families rely on our early education system to keep working.



Child Abuse Prevention Month in April

Source: the North Carolina Early Education Coalition— (919) 442-2000

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Outreach Coordinator /Newsletter
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Sandra Arasim, Craven Smart Start Infant Toddler Specialist for Region 2, is heading up the Craven Smart Start Advocacy Committee.

Craven Smart Start Forms an Advocacy Committee

The United States has 24 million children under six years of age. All 24 million of them have to be taken care of every day, all day. Who provides the care for these children from birth to five and how they do it, is a topic that a lot of Americans may not think about or worry about, but experts in the early childhood field describe these areas, "as the most overlooked, underestimated, and potentially game-changing issue in America today." Why, when the importance of quality early care and education is so widely accepted, does our country continue to fail so many children and families?

Earlier this year, Craven Smart Start staff began looking at this issue, when they formed an advocacy committee to bring early childhood issues to the forefront of local and state policy decision-making. The goal of the committee is to educate and mobilize families, early educators, and administrators in our community to work together to affect policy change that promotes healthy development and safe educational environment for our youngest children.

The Craven Smart Start Advocacy Committee is planning several free events this spring to educate parents, grandparents, community leaders, and state and local policy makers with the screening of "No Small Matter", an award-winning documentary film about the vital, important experiences in a child's first years. Individuals who are interested in learning more about the Craven Smart Start Advocacy Committee or in joining the committee are encouraged to contact Courtney Cartwright at courtney@cravensmartstart.org.

Looking for Child Care? We can Help!

Looking for Child Care? The “Find Child Care NC” call center is still available to help. Specialists, like our Parent Referral Specialist Bianca Salinas are available to assist you on weekdays between 8 a.m.—5 p.m. EST. Call 1-888-600-1685 to connect with the childcare facility fit for you and your child.

More about Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time for communities to come together to build caring connections, supportive environments, and positive experiences for all children. We know child maltreatment is a preventable problem. All adults play a role in building safe, stable, nurturing homes and environments needed for the healthy development of our future generation of parents, leaders, and community member. North Carolina’s future prosperity depends on it. Be a connection for NC children and families during Child Abuse Prevention Month this April.

Source: Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina

Contact Us

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

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Visit us on the web at
www.cravensmartstart.org

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

About our photos on page 5.....with our Craven Smart Start Board Members, before the pandemic!

- **Top Left:** Craven Smart Start Board Members, Betty Kwasnick and Lisa Kemp, volunteered at our information booth at the 2019 Festival of Fun at Union Point Park in New Bern and gave out “pinwheels for prevention” to children who came by with their parents.
- **Top Right:** Another great volunteer, Board Member Pat Ipock sets out bag lunches for early educators who attended the 13th Annual Building Brighter Futures Conference at Craven Community College in New Bern on March 23, 2019.
- **Bottom Left and Right** We say good-bye to New Bern Police Chief Tous-saint Summers and to Craven County Commissioner Theron McCabe, who have faithfully served on our Board of Directors for a number of years. Chief Summers, seen here with staff members Pinkie Moore and Bianca Salinas at the City of New Bern Benefits Fair in 2019, retired from his position as New Bern Police Chief in March, 2021. Commissioner McCabe, seen here at the Craven County Health Department booth at our Resource information Fair in Havelock on May, 2018 recently completed his term on our board. He is being replaced by Craven County Commissioner Beatrice Smith. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service to our Smart Start partnership!

