

# CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

Fourth Issue FY 2020- 2021

## Concerns about Child Care Make the News

Child care seems to be a hot news topic these days. An article in the June 6th issue of the Sun Journal with the headline “Child Care Poses Crisis for Parents, Centers” recently caught our attention, as it addressed the child care crisis, which has repercussions not only for families seeking child care to work but for the future of the industry itself. Below are some enlightening facts from the article:

According to estimates, child care lost 1 in 6 jobs while COVID-19 raged. Many of those workers may never return to those jobs, in some cases because they have been lured to higher paying, less gratifying work elsewhere. Child care workers earned a median hourly wage of \$11.65 in 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Child care employees often lack benefits and their work is intense both physically and emotionally.

Nearly 1 in 4 parents is either not working or working less than before the pandemic, thanks to disruptions in child care and in-person school, according to a recent report by the Federal Reserve. Child care shortages continue to plague parts of the country. For America to get back to work, it needs to solve those shortages.

Besides economic reasons, why should we be concerned about this crisis? Here’s why: The first five years of life are critical growth and brain development years, which are supported by nurturing they receive from parents and caregivers in their lives. Children, who are in child care settings, need experienced, well-trained early educators with whom they can bond and form attachments with to promote their healthy development and early learning.

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Family Literacy staff and adult students take part in the Charter and Induction Ceremony of the National Adult Education Honor Society at Family Literacy site at Vanceboro in May.

## Mission of Craven Smart Start:

Building Brighter Futures for Young Children

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**Craven Smart Start's Raising A Reader Program completed their year in May & each child received a special blue bag with books and items to keep. More on page 4.**

## NC Pre-Kindergarten Registration Is Online

The Craven County School District is now holding on-line registration for children who will be four years old by August 31, 2021 for pre-kindergarten programs offered for the 2021-2022 school year.

Parents interested in applying should visit [www.CRAVENK12.ORG/PAGR/18238](http://www.CRAVENK12.ORG/PAGR/18238) and click on the link to begin the pre-kindergarten application process. Parents will need to submit their child's birth certificate and proof of family income, which can be two consecutive pay stubs, annual tax documents, award letters from SSA or unemployment, child support, or other forms of income. All information will remain confidential. If parents need assistance in completing the application, they can call Family Literacy at (252) 244-3226 to make an appointment.

## Spotlight: Subsidized Child Care Assistance

The Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program (SCCA), which is administered by Craven County Department of Social Services, provides assistance to eligible families in paying for quality child care. SCCA is funded with federal and state funds. Craven Smart Start, also provides funding to support the program, approximately 32% of our service dollars annually. Below is an update from Robyn Scott, Child Care Services Coordinator:

During the 2021 fiscal year, Subsidized Child Care Assistance (SCCA) played a major role in assisting families, especially during the pandemic. Parent fees were able to be waived for families April—August 2020 and March—June 2021, which focused on serving essential workers as designated by Governor Cooper; while this program was funded by separate funds, Craven DSS worked hard to remove as many essential employees as possible from the waiting list during this time, and were quite successful. While schools were closed, childcare facilities remained open and continued caring for the community's children, especially for those essential workers who needed to keep the county going and needed a safe place for their children to stay. Many childcare facilities also became schools, since children switched to virtual learning at a time when they were attending childcare facilities full-time. Providers were offered PPE, several rounds of grants and teacher bonuses, and while these expenses were covered by COVID relief funds, subsidy allowed many of these children to continue attending. Craven County ended the budget year at exactly 100% spending coefficient. Due to the extra expenses of COVID-19, federal money was provided to cover any and all over-spending. All Smart Start funds were completely spent by Craven DSS Subsidy. With the accumulated additional expenses, the waiting list families are currently not being served. We hope to serve these families in the next budget year and continue serving our existing families, as funding allows.

Pre-Kindergarten Programs are designed to provide high quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. Participants will be selected based on program criteria, which may include family income. Applicants will be notified of the selection at a later date. There is no cost to families who are selected to participate.



**NC Pre-Kindergarten Registration is online.**

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**Sara Spalding, an Adult Educator for the Family Literacy Program, presents a certificate to induct an adult student into the National Adult Education Honor Society on May 6th.**

## Family Literacy Holds Honor Society Induction

The Craven County Family Literacy Program integrates children's education, adult education and parent education for families in western Craven County, with sites at the Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary School and James W. Smith Elementary School, near Cove City. The program provides adults with education in the areas of ESL, G.E.D. and job/parenting skills. Program staff also strive to provide their adult students with traditional opportunities that high school students typically experience.

On the evening of May 6th on the grounds of their Vanceboro site, Family Literacy staff held a Charter and Induction Ceremony to establish a National Adult Education Honor Society for ten students of the Family Literacy Program. Stephanie Light, Family Specialist, welcomed special guests and families and Renee' Harrell, CCFL Coordinator, gave a presentation about the Family Literacy Program. Adult Educator Regina Edmonds gave the history of the honor society and shared how they were able to obtain a charter. Regina Edmonds and Sara Spalding, were given the honor of inducting their adult students into the Honor Society. During the induction ceremony, they introduced each student and shared their inspiring personal stories and accomplishments. Each student was awarded a pen and certificate.

Craven Smart Start would like to congratulate each student on becoming an inductee of the National Adult Education Honor Society!

## Concerns about Child Care in the News—from Page 1

So what is the solution to the child care crisis in North Carolina? According to the North Carolina Early Education Coalition, “Professional compensation and benefits for early educators are urgently needed to attract and retain high-quality educators who can support young children’s development and keep North Carolina working. 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 teachers can’t afford to stay for such low wages”.

Help may come from the American Rescue Plan, as North Carolina will be receiving an estimated \$1.3 billion in federal funds, with some designated to stabilize and strengthen child care. Our North Carolina legislators and state leaders are still hard at work on the state budget, which means that this is a really good time for parents, grandparents, early educators, child advocates and others to voice their concerns about the child care crisis in North Carolina and the ways they can fix it.

In this issue, we, also share information about some of direct service providers and their programs. If you have questions or want more information, contact Pinkie Moore at [pmoore@cravensmartstart.org](mailto:pmoore@cravensmartstart.org) or call (252) 671-0689.

## Contact Us

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

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

## About photos on page 5...an update, a thank-you and a special good-bye.

- **Top Left:** Dr. Nancy Carroll, our first Craven Smart Start Board President, unloads the stuffed animals that she and other members of Fidelis Sigma Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa collected for Craven Smart Start for children in our community. Thank you, Dr. Carroll and members of ADK, for your wonderful donation!
- **Top Right:** We say good-bye to our Board Member and long-time friend, Betty Kwasnick. Betty, seen here volunteering at our information booth before the pandemic, will be retiring from the Craven County Health Department on July 21st. Thank you, Betty, for your service to our Smart Start partnership and for your commitment and dedication to the children of Craven County through your years of employment with the Craven County Health Department and Craven County Schools.
- **Bottom Left & Right** Children who participated in Raising A Reader this year show their excitement about the blue bags and literacy materials they received by taking part in the program. Nadia Lowe, Raising A Reader Coordinator, says that all participants have received their blue bags filled with books, kindergarten kits and certificates. Likewise, teachers in the classrooms that participated received baskets with books, STEM activities to use in their classrooms and a gift card. All Raising A Reader materials have been returned and are being sanitized and disinfected to prepare for the next implementation year. This year, 93 children from six sites, including two family child care homes, participated in the program.

