

CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

First Issue FY 2021 2022

Looking Back and Moving on in 2022

Greetings and Happy New Year! Where did 2021 go? It seems like we spent a lot of time focused on the pandemic, on COVID-19 and then at the end of 2021, on the Omicron variant. Despite the distractions and disruptions caused by the pandemic, we were able to accomplish much.

During the pandemic Craven Smart Start staff adapted, adjusted and tried to figure out the most effective ways to offer our services that focus on young children and their families, while keeping our families and children, early childhood providers and our staff safe. As we adapted and adjusted, we found new ways to work, like Zoom meetings, virtual trainings and a virtual conference and we prevailed, teleworking, until August 2nd, when it seemed safe to bring all of our in-house staff back into the office.

In the new fiscal year, that began on July 1st, we have incorporated some of these new work methods with previous work strategies and have been quite pleased with the outcomes, some of which proved to be first time accomplishments or efforts. We have much to do during the remainder of the year and we are optimistic that the COVID issues will lessen and we will be able to have more in-person contact and community outreach, which has been hard to do during the pandemic.

In the meanwhile, we are pleased to be able to share information about some of our Smart Start activities and our staff in this publication. We appreciate your interest in and support for the young children (birth to five) and families of our community. We, also, appreciate your support for the Smart Start services that our agency and community partners provide to our Craven County children and their families. Thank you!



Some winning runners from the Holiday Hustle receive their medals from Jean Kenefick, Craven Smart Start Board President, and Santa Claus. 242 runners participated in the event!

Mission of Craven Smart Start:

Building Brighter Futures for Young Children

In This Issue

- Looking Back and Moving on in 2022
- Craven Smart Start Updates and Accomplishments
- Helping Children to Become Life-long Readers
- J. Joshua Byrd, Ph.D. Joins Craven Smart Start



Our family-friendly Lending Library is now open to the public and available for children and families to visit. Please give us a call. We look forward to seeing you!

Craven Smart Start Updates & Accomplishments

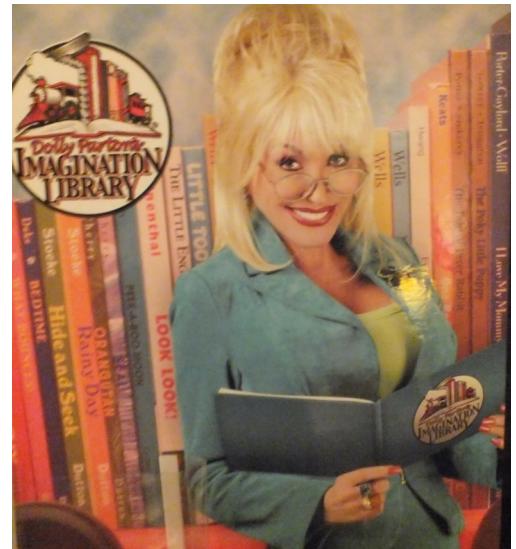
Our office and Lending Library re-opened to the public last fall. We are following the Health and Safety requirements set by the DCDEE and CDC to ensure the safety of individuals who use our services, as well as our staff. Families, child care providers and others will be able to visit our office and use our services by calling ahead to schedule an appointment before arrival at the office. They, also, will need to wear a face mask, follow social distancing requirement and temperature checks will be required prior to entering the building. Hand sanitizing stations have been placed throughout the building for visitor and staff to use. The entire building, including the Lending Library and the children's play area have been cleaned and sanitized. To make an appointment to visit the Lending Library or use one of our services, please call 252-672-5921. We are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Craven Smart Start's Raising A Reader (RAR) program, which promotes early literacy development between young children and caregivers/parents, through a weekly book bag rotation system, continues to excel under the leadership of RAR Coordinator Nadia Lowe. This year, the program is operating in five sites in 10 classes. These sites are Fresh Start Home Childcare; Excel 1; Excel 6; Excel 7 and the NC Pre-Kindergarten program at Bridgeton Elementary School. This makes the first time that child care classes in a Craven County School have been selected to participate in our Raising A Reader program. Nadia's goal this year is to take RAR and STEM outside in the outdoor learning environment. "Thanks to the grant from B/S/H, that we received earlier this year, Raising A Reader will be helping participating sites enhance literacy on their playground." Stay tuned for more to come.

Helping Children to Become Life-long Readers

Did you know that 5,400 children in Craven County have received free books through Dolly's Parton Imagination Library program, since Craven Smart Start initiated the program in the fall of 2017? Even during the pandemic, this number grew significantly. One of the reasons is the support that we have received from community agencies. From the beginning of the program, our partnership was pro-active in reaching out to other agencies and pediatric clinics about becoming literacy partners by registering their clients and patients for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. We are most appreciative of these partners for their support and assistance.

We also want to express our gratitude to the North Carolina General Assembly for their continued statewide support of the program. Without their support, we would not be able to operate Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Craven County and many of our children would not have age-appropriate books in their homes.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

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Pinkie Moore —Community
Outreach Coordinator /Newsletter
Writer/Editor



Dr. Joshua Byrd joined the Craven Smart Start staff on November 15, 2021

J. Joshua Byrd, Ph.D. Joins Craven Smart Start

J. Joshua Byrd, Ph.D., has been hired by Craven Smart Start to fill a Healthy Social Behavior Specialist position for Region 2 Child Care Resource and Referral, which serves Beaufort, Craven, Hyde, Pamlico, Tyrrell and Washington counties. In this position, he will provide specialized consultation, technical assistance and training focusing on identifying, preventing and addressing challenging behaviors in young children in child care centers in Region 2 counties. He will work with teachers to enhance classroom management techniques and to promote child-centered learning activities that promote pro-social behaviors in children.

Originally from Newport, North Carolina, Dr. Byrd holds degrees from the University of Mount Olive and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Early Childhood Education (B.S.), Child Youth, and Family Studies (M.S.) and Human Sciences with a specialization in child development (Ph.D.). He has extensive experience in working with children, families and teachers through research, program evaluation and holds a Master Teacher position in an ECE program. Dr. Byrd has returned to the area with his family and they currently live in Newport.

Editors Note: Congratulations to Josh Byrd on obtaining his doctorate. We first got to know Josh, when he was a early childhood education student at the University of Mount Olive in New Bern. It's so good to have him back in ENC.

Thank You!

In November and December of 2021, the staff of Craven Smart Start and CCR&R held a food drive and a toy donation drive for Toys for Tots. Our staff would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who helped us with these efforts. Our food drive was a great success for a first time effort and we were very pleased to have a two carloads of items to deliver to the food bank of Religious Community Services (RCS). Likewise, our Toys for Tots toy drive was another success with donations of very nice toys, including two children's bikes! Last but not least, we would like to thank the New Bern Chamber of Commerce and the businesses and donors who contributed to Craven Smart Start's Giving Tuesday efforts during the Giving Tuesday drive-through at Union Point Park on November 30th.

Our 9th Annual Holiday Hustle proved to be one of our best race fundraisers to-date and the weather was wonderful. Many thanks to B/S/H/, our Presenting Sponsor, and Taco Bell, our Jingle Bell Jog 5K sponsor, as well as all of the other sponsors, the runners and the volunteers. Your support is greatly appreciated.

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 photos on page 5.

- **Top Left:** The New Bern Civitans donated over 200 backpacks, lap blankets, notebooks and folders to the Craven County Family Literacy Program—the donation valued over \$3,000. Members of the New Bern Civitans, seen here, presented the items to Renee' Harrell, Coordinator for the Family Literacy Program, who is on the right.
- **Top Right:** Bianca Salinas, Parent Referral Specialist, prepares the trunk of her car for the 1st Annual Trunk or Treat in Havelock. The event was organized by the Havelock Recreation Department and the Havelock Police Department. According to Lt. Chris Morning of the Havelock Police Department, the event drew 1,200 to 1,400 parents and children and was non-stop for two hours! This is one of the biggest events we have participated in, since the pandemic began. We were very pleased to meet so many Havelock and Cherry Point families.
- **Bottom Left:** Pinkie Moore, Community Outreach Coordinator, on left, presents Linder Ervin, an administrator with Child Care Network, with books for children who attend their NC Pre-kindergarten class.
- **Bottom Right:** This year's Giving Tuesday drive-through donation event, held at Union Point Park, was a great opportunity for non-profits to share information about their services. Here, Bianca talks with representatives from Faith Connections and the Craven County Disaster Recovery Alliance.

