

# CRAVEN SMART START NEWS

Craven Smart Start Newsletter

First Issue FY 2022-2023

## Back to Normal and Beyond

Greetings friends. The first quarter of FY 22-23 has been productive, but challenging for Craven Smart Start. Our Smart Start activities, both the ones we operate in-house and those operated by our community partners that we fund, are in-person and back on track, although there continues to be a shortage of qualified B-K teachers for NC Pre-K. Likewise, the resource lending library/play space in our administrative office is still not being visited by the number of parents and children like we experienced before the pandemic. However, we continue to promote this unique resource like our other programs through community outreach and other marketing efforts.

We know from our contacts that many families with young children are struggling now and we are looking for creative ways to help them. One of the ways discussed by our Board is seeking support and donations from the community for items like diapers and wipes and we will be doing just that during the month of November of 2022. Be sure to look for flyers about Craven Smart Start's Diaper Drop and see our article on page 4 of this newsletter. For the last 10 years our partnership has held the very popular Holiday Hustle, 10k, 5k and Family Fun Run in Downtown New Bern. The Holiday Hustle will take place this year on December 10th. B/S/H/ will be our Presenting Sponsor. To register, go to the Craven Smart Start webpage and click on the Holiday Hustle logo.

Like other non-profits, Craven Smart Start has limited private dollars, which restricts our ability to expand services, but we are looking for grants and other opportunities to assist us and we hope that we can rely on our friends for their support. We greatly appreciate your interest in Craven Smart Start and we hope you enjoy the publication and find it informative. Thank you.

## Mission of Craven Smart Start:

Building Brighter Futures for Young Children



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Outreach events give our staff opportunities to meet families with young children and staff from new resources in the community. Erin Mitchell, with ACES (on right) volunteered for us.



Our CCR&R Technical Assistance Team took part in the grand opening of the childcare center For the Love of Children in James City. See the story below.

### Best Wishes to Dr. Terry Colon on her Retirement

Earlier this year, Dr. Terri Colon, Lead Early Childhood Instructor at Craven Community College, announced her retirement. We wanted to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Colon for her years of service to the childcare workforce in Craven County and for her support and involvement with Craven Smart Start, especially for serving on our Board of Directors for a number of years. She was always there for us, when we needed her.

Terri, we miss you, but we wish you a much-deserved retirement with lots more time to devote to your interests and to your grandchildren. Congratulations.

### Program Updates from Direct Service Providers

Below are updates from some direct service providers-more on page 4.

- From Child Care Resource and Referral:** For the past 3 1/2 years, our Technical Assistance Team has been working with Denise Stevens, an experienced Family Child Care Home Provider, with her dream to own a childcare center. That effort and assistance from the TA Team and the perseverance of Ms. Stevens and her husband, came to fruition in a “grand” way on September 21st. On that day, the new childcare center, For the Love of Children, was officially opened in a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony with the New Bern Chamber of Commerce, dignitaries, family, friends and Craven Smart Start staff in attendance. Ms. Stevens was very emotional in acknowledging all the support that she had received over the past 3 1/2 years and tearfully acknowledged “the ladies at Craven Smart Start”. “They have been with me through this from the beginning. Every time I called they would come and stay after hours to help me. I appreciate them so much.” Thank you. Denise, we were so glad to help you.
- From Childcare Subsidy:** Childcare Subsidy continues to have no waiting list for eligible families needing childcare to support employment. Income limits increased effective 7/1/2022, which is allowing more families to be eligible for the program.
- From Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL).** DPIL has been enrolling more children and receiving fewer returned books from the US Post Office. As of January 2022, there were 3,282 children enrolled in Craven County. Several of the childcare centers in Craven County have received DPIL displays with brochures to hand out to their families and other connections are being made with many of the other childcare facilities in the county.



Dr. Terry Colon will now have more time to spend with her precious grand-daughter!

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Demeka Bryant is Craven Smart Start's new Region 2 Birth to Three Specialist.

## Welcome New Employee Demeka Bryant

Demeka Bryant was hired by Craven Smart Start to fill the position of the Birth to Three Specialist for Region 2 Child Care Resource and Referral, which serves Beaufort, Craven, Hyde, Pamlico, Tyrrell and Washington Counties. The Birth to Three Specialist position (previously called Infant Toddler Specialist) is a certified professional position that supports infant-toddler teachers in licensed childcare programs to ensure that young children receive quality care in the first three years of life. In this position, Demeka will provide the following services: on-site technical assistance; trainings; resource ideas and guidelines; assistance with ITERS-R; improvement plans; and on-going staff support.

Demeka holds a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's Degree in Education with a specialization in Reading Literacy from Ashford University. She has experience working with children and families as a Head Start Teacher for the Economic Improvement Council. She also worked for Greene Lamp Head Start as an Early Head Start Compliance Specialist.

Demeka says that it is a pleasure to serve the community in this capacity and that she looks forward to this exciting new journey as your Birth to Three Specialist. We are very pleased to have Demeka join our Craven Smart Start team.

## Craven Smart Start Diaper Drop in November

One in three US families with young children struggle to provide enough diapers to keep their babies or toddlers clean, dry and healthy. The cost of diapers hits low-wage families the hardest and current public support programs help some families, but not many. Most childcare facilities require parents to provide diapers for their children. Nationally, 57% of parents who struggle to provide diapers and who rely on childcare, reported they missed an average of four days of school or work in the past month because they did not have diapers.

To help meet the diaper need for Craven County families who struggle to pay for diapers, Craven Smart Start will be sponsoring a diaper drop during the month of November, with a diaper distribution starting in December. We are currently seeking individuals, groups, church circles, civic organizations, businesses and others to collect packages of diapers and/or wipes and to “drop” them off at our administrative office/resource lending library between 8:00 am - 5:00 pm on Monday through Thursday during the month of November.

For more information, contact Pinkie Moore, Community Outreach Coordinator at [pmoore@cravensmartstart.org](mailto:pmoore@cravensmartstart.org) or call our office at (252) 672-5921.

## 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](http://www.cravensmartstart.org)

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

### About photos on page 5.

**From Raising A Reader (RAR).** RAR has announced the childcare centers and schools that will participate in Raising a Reader this year. They are Bridgeton Elementary NC Pre-K; Havelock Elementary NC Pre-K; Childcare Network 77 NC Pre-K; Duffyfield Child Development Center NC Pre-K; Excel Learning Center 1 Pre-K; Excel Learning Center 6 NC Pre-K; Excel Learning Center 7 NC Pre-K. Classroom materials have been prepared. The mandatory teacher training was held at Excel 7 on the evening of September 22nd. Now the teachers will plan their parent intro workshops. RAR received a grant from the Bosch Community Fund for STEM activities again this year. The following facilities are pictured on Page 5:

- **Top Left** Excel Learning Center 6 in Havelock
- **Top Right** Excel Learning Center 1 in River Bend
- **Middle Left** Bridgeton Elementary
- **Middle Right** Excel Learning Center 7 in New Bern
- **Bottom:** Childcare Network # 77

**Reach Out and Read (ROR)** has been assisting the Craven County Health Departments in New Bern and Havelock in re-opening waiting rooms. They have been provided bookshelves with various book for book sharing. Both sites have received books in a variety of languages, including dual language collections. Over 350 books have been given to children during well check-up visits.

