

Wake County SmartStart
is your local partnership



Mark Your Calendar

*All events free unless price listed

February

16 -Thu.
ITS - SIDS

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Wake County SmartStart, 1121 Situs Court, Suite 250 Raleigh, NC 27606
Call Child Care Health Consultants at 250-1192 for more information.

21 - Tues.

From Management to Leadership

6:30-8:30p.m.

Playspace, 410 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 150 Raleigh, NC, 27603 (back side of the Creamery building off of Tucker St.). Hosted by Wakeaeyc. Free for members. \$10 for nonmembers.

March

4 - Sat.

Caring for Children with Allergies

White Plains, 313 SE Maynard Rd., Cary
Call Child Care Health Consultants at 250-1192 for more information.

6-9

National Smart Start Conference

Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, NC
For info go to: www.ncsmartstart.org

7 - Tues

Sniffles, Sneezes and Tummy Aches

6:30-8:30p.m.

Wake County Human Services, 10 Sunnybrook Road, Rm 350. Call Child Care Health Consultants at 250-1192 for more information.

April

2-8

Week of the Young Child:
Building Better Futures for All Children

For more information on tips to help celebrate, go to, www.naeyc.org/about/woyc/

20 -Thu.

ITS - SIDS

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Wake County SmartStart, 1121 Situs Court, Suite 250 Raleigh, NC 27606
Call Child Care Health Consultants at 250-1192 for more information.

look for more events, go to www.wakesmartstart.org/calendar



The Wake County SmartStart office has moved

Wake County SmartStart moved to new offices in mid December. The new address, 1121 Situs Court, Suite 250, Raleigh, NC 27606, is located just off Jones Franklin Road and I-440. The new office includes slightly larger space that will accommodate community

Building Block Briefs

meetings currently held off-site. Directions to our new offices can be found on our website, www.wakesmartstart.org or by calling our office at the new number: 919.851.9550.



Sign up for email updates

Learn more about what's going on in the early care and education industry locally and across the state. Join Champions for Children, an online advocacy e-mail list and the Wake County SmartStart e-newsletter list. Go to www.wakesmartstart.org and click on "join our mailing list."

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Set your standards



By **Kate Thegen**,
Early Childhood Care
Consultant

Lovely Child Care Center worked hard to offer quality child care. In pursuit of rated license stars, the director purchased new equipment, joined a quality improvement project and teachers went back to school.

All seemed well for six months, but then two teachers left for better-paying jobs. Teachers grumbled about many little things and parents noticed. The director saw teachers going back to old habits, like sitting together on the playground instead of interacting with the kids. The momentum for professionalism was slipping away. The director was frustrated!

This is a common story as we continue to raise the quality of child care. The barriers are complex and good intentions alone are not enough. We understand quality child care – but the adults who are asked to create quality still face low wages, few benefits and hard work. How can we bridge reality and expectations?

An emerging strategy is found in “workforce standards.” In all professions, when staff have supportive work environments, they can focus on their performance and are generally more satisfied and turnover is reduced. But how do we know what a supportive child care work environment looks like?

The most established tool to assess work environments

SEE WORK STANDARDS, PAGE 2

Inside this issue:

- Learn more about how you can offer workplace benefits
- Get the latest resources on work standards

Professional development activity opens doors to higher education

Family child care home provider goes back to school

Mary McGinnis, a family child care home provider in Raleigh, has been providing care for infants and toddlers for more than 28 years.

McGinnis knows how much the profession has transformed, from poor regulations to the AA System, to the Star Rated License System.

She worked hard to maintain a high quality child care business throughout each change.

But, when it came to going back to school, there wasn't much incentive. She had taken all the required classes at Wake Technical Community College since the mid 80s, but didn't think beyond obtaining her required credentials.

Thanks to a Wake County SmartStart-funded program delivered by Child Care Services Association (CCSA), 58-year-old McGinnis discovered how many community resources there were to support her in obtaining an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education.

Deidrea Thompson, a professional planning associate from the program—Professional Development Planning for Child Care Providers—phoned McGinnis and told her how she could get back in

SEE EDUCATION, PAGE 2



Success Story

Mary McGinnis and her children at Mary's Child Care, a 5-star licensed family child care home.

Wake County SmartStart Quality Enhancement Initiative Director meetings tackle workplace issues

Quality Enhancement Director Meetings over the last few months have brought in the following guest speakers to talk about work standards, wage and labor laws and benefits. Providers who participate in Wake County SmartStart's QEI/QMI activity gain valuable resources to help them better manage their child care facilities.

Mike Morrow, NC Department of Labor Senior Investigator, gave a presentation on Wage and Labor Laws in January.



Kate Thegen discussed Model Work Standards in October (read her column on page 1).



Mike Womble, owner of Carolina Human Resources, presented to providers on employee benefits in November (read story on page 3).



WORK STANDARDS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in child care is the Model Work Standards (MWS) developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce in 1995. This self-assessment and planning tool describes the components of a professional work environment and is used in projects around the state and nationally.

The MWS addresses 13 components, and two key ideas weave them all together. How we treat teachers like the professionals we want them to be can be summed up in communication and respect – both are easy to promise but need systems to become trusted and effective.

While improving quality, we need to understand that how it feels to do our work impacts how well we do it. The structures of communication, respect and professionalism are our safety net when stress threatens to overwhelm us. A healthy working environment sustains our ability to do our best work for young children.

Since 2004, Kate Thegen has owned and operated Red Broom Training and Consulting, a service designed to address challenging child care quality improvement issues. She supports the child care community with trainings. For more information contact Kate at kathegen@aol.com

Model Work Standards and more resources

These are the following 13 Model Work Standards developed by the Center for Child Care Workforce:

- Wages
- Benefits
- Job descriptions and evaluation
- Hiring and promotions
- Termination, suspension, severance and grievance procedures
- Classroom assignments, hours of work
- Communication, team building & staff meetings
- Decision-making & problem-solving
- Professional development
- Professional support
- Diversity
- Health and safety
- Physical setting

Resources:

Blueprint for Action, Circle of Influence, Paula Jorde Bloom
Program Administration, Scale Talan and Bloom
Visionary Director, Margie Carter and Deb Curtis

Creative employee benefits: It's not just about the money

As the saying goes, "it's the little things that mean a lot." According to Michael Womble, owner of Carolina Human Resources, it's the little rewards or benefits that employees value from an employer.

While becoming an employer of choice means following work standards that offer vacation time, sick time and health insurance, most employee polls show that compensation and benefits rank second to a good work environment.

Creating innovative benefits that recognize employee job performance, autonomy and strengthen relationships with co-workers is key, Womble says, especially in fostering positive attitudes.

"Whether a place is a good place to work or not is a perception," he says, "As a manager or employer, it's all about your attitude."

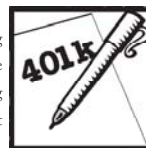
While hiring people who have good attitudes is important, a positive work culture can be the key in retaining strong employees.

"When I ask many child care directors if they offer benefits, they say no because they think of a benefit as a 401 K plan or retirement plan," Womble says. "But a benefit is any kind of a reward."

With a little creativity, there are other ways to support and value employees and the contributions they make to your business.

Here are some inexpensive, yet effective ways to reward employees:

- Order pizza once a month or have treats and juice in the break room.
- Each year, offer bereavement time to mourn the loss of a spouse, parent or child in addition to vacation days. Womble says: "Bereavement time is rarely used, so there's not a lot of cost to the center, but it's a nice benefit to support staff if tragedy strikes."
- Be creative and institute a Bonus Bucks program based on monthly performance, customer service, teaching, etc. A \$25 gift certificate or cash will encourage staff, Womble says.
- Raise tuition by \$5 a child a month to help offset the cost of medical insurance. If your staff participates in TEACH, enroll in NC Cares health plan where the employer pays one-third, employee pays one-third and NC Cares pays one-third of monthly health premiums.
- Negotiate with fitness centers or shopping clubs to offer reduced membership fees for your employees.



EDUCATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

school and how education was key in maintaining her 5-star rating.

A skeptical McGinnis invited Thompson to her home to obtain more information on developing a professional education plan.

Within an hour, Thompson connected McGinnis to a scholarship program that helps providers with tuition, supplemental income support and

substitute teaching support for release time from her child care home during day classes.

What's more, Thompson had registered her for classes during the first meeting. McGinnis was handed a class schedule and contact information to Wake Technical Community College. "I couldn't believe how easy it was and all the resources that were available to me," she said, listing the TEACH Childhood@Project and WAGES@. "There's so much support for providers that it's impractical not to go to school."

Now McGinnis is in her second semester and she

says taking college courses has helped her gain a new perspective and connect with other providers.

"It gives me a chance to have meaningful discussions with other people in my profession," she says, adding that she wants to pursue a Bachelor's Degree after she completes her Associates.

Thompson says McGinnis' attitude toward continuing her education encourages others: "It's great to check in with her and learn about her progress."

The program offers monthly consultation of the development plan to keep teachers on track, loaned text books and the use of a resource library at CCSA, Thompson says.

McGinnis says her education is helping her work with "her babies" and focus on their healthy development. "Through this program, Wake County SmartStart is helping me to support children and families," she says.

For information on Professional Development Planning for Child Providers, call Deidrea Thompson at 779-2220.

Wake County SmartStart partners share resources, their work at Making Connections Partner Fair

The first partner fair was held Nov. 29 for Wake County SmartStart partners and the child care community to share resources on services for young children and their families.



Jackie McDonald from Wake County Human Services' Child Care Subsidy Office talks with Cindy Drew, director of Method Child Development Center.



Adam Robinson from the Wake Area Health Education Center chats with Anitra Grove, Infant/Toddler Specialist at Child Care Services Association.



From left: Lula Johnson from United Way 2-1-1 shares resources with Nora Roehm, a counselor at Community Partnerships, and a representative from Head Start.

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