

From the Executive Director: We remain committed to our mission

No doubt many of you are aware that North Carolina, like so many states, is facing an extremely challenging fiscal situation. Our state's budgetary challenges will ultimately affect us all. Wake County SmartStart has seen its current operating budget reduced by almost 5%. It is possible we will see a more significant cut next fiscal year.

Former President Bill Clinton once said, "We're going to have to make tough choices, and we're going to have to make them together." Wake County SmartStart shares this sentiment. As we consider the services we support and the partners with whom we work, it is clear we will need to work with our partner organizations to make choices.

Since 1996, Wake County SmartStart has worked to ensure Wake County's children, birth through 5-years-old, are prepared for success in school and in life. I want to assure you we will continue to use every penny possible to support this work. Our overriding goal as we re-adjust our budget is to continue to offer the highest quality

service to the children of Wake County who have the greatest need for the programs offered. We will make strategic reductions in areas that will not have a direct impact on services to children. Admittedly, uncertainty can be frightening. Rather than allow ourselves to be distracted by fear, we at Wake County SmartStart are determined to remain focused on our mission of serving Wake County's children, ages birth to 5. You have our assurances these children will continue to be our highest priority.

I appreciate this news may be of concern to you, but I want to assure you that I am confident we will meet this challenge. Please do not hesitate to call or e-mail should you have questions or require our assistance. In closing, I would like to thank you for your commitment to our agency and to our community's young children and their families.

Sincerely,
Pam Dowdy
Executive Director

Tips for Toy Safety During the Holidays

December is National Safe Toy and Gifts Month



With the holidays right around the corner, this is a perfect time to think about toy safety, and coincidentally, December is National Safe Toy and Gifts Month. Perhaps two of the most important rules for safe toy giving are 1) be mindful of age guidelines and 2) select toys suited for the child.

It may surprise many of you to know that each year in the United States, hundreds of thousands of children are injured by toys that were thought to be safe. Often, adults select toys that appeal to them rather than choosing an appropriate toy for the child.

SEE SAFETY, PAGE 2

Inside this issue:

- Motherhead Literacy Program
- Star License Renewals
- Market Surveys have been sent out. Fill yours out and mail it in.

Star License Renewals

Professional accomplishment deserves recognition

Receiving or renewing a child care license is a tremendous accomplishment. Since July 2008, almost three dozen centers and homes in Wake County either received a 4 or 5 star license for the first time, or renewed their 4 or 5 star license. Wake County SmartStart would like to recognize these centers for their hard work and their commitment to providing a high-quality environment for Wake County's youngest.

A Mother's Touch Child Development Center

A New Beginning Child Care

A Safe Place

A Safe Place Child Enrichment Center

ABC Land II

All About Kids, Inc.

All For You Christian Home Day Care

Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Chesterbrook Academy

Childcare Network #60

Childcare Network #133

Childcare Network # 61

Connie's Private Home Daycare

Country Sunshine Children's center

Crosby Head Start

Early Preschool and Learning Center, LLC

Easter Seals UCP Charlie Gaddy Children's Center

Edenton Street United Methodist Child Dev. Center

German Immersion Preschool

Hearts at Work 4 Kids

Holly Springs Learning Center

La Petite Academy-Leesville

Little Tots Child Care, Inc.

Mi Neighborhood Playhouse Too

M.O.D.E. School of Esoteric Arts and Sciences

Mrs. Mac's Childcare

Nanny's Nursery

NC Preschool Academy

Pam's Day Care of North Raleigh, Inc.

Presley Brooke Academy

Reach Out and Touch Child Care Home

Ruby Reid Child Development Center, Inc.

Teddy Bears

The Goddard School-Holly Springs

TOY SAFETY continued from page 1

In anticipation of the upcoming holidays, Wake County SmartStart offers the following tips when buying toys for children.

- Read the label. Warning labels give important information about how to use a toy and for which ages the toy is appropriate. Be sure to show your child how to use the toy the right way.
- Make sure strings, straps and cords on toys are shorter than seven inches. Anything longer poses a strangulation hazard for children.
- Check toys for sturdiness and for small parts that could be swallowed. Assess toys for sharp edges or points.
- Avoid toys that shoot objects into the air. Pellet and BB guns, bows and arrows, and slingshots are particularly dangerous toys and can cause serious eye injuries or choking.
- Insist that an adult supervise when higher risk toys are being used. For example, when younger children are playing with balloons (a significant choking hazard) or older children are using riding toys (which can overturn or be struck by a vehicle), an adult should be watching.
- Because families have children of different ages, make sure toys meant for older children are kept away from younger children. Read toy directions and adhere to recommended age ranges.
- Once you have opened your gifts, pick up holiday wrapping, bags, paper, ribbons and bows as these items pose suffocation and choking hazards, particularly for our youngest.
- Frequently, toys are recalled for safety reasons, and you will want to be certain your children are not playing with recalled toys. For a regularly updated list of recalled toys, visit <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/toy.html>.

For more tips on general holiday safety, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics site, www.aap.org



Motheread Works with Teachers to Bolster Classroom Literacy Efforts and Activities

Research confirms what many of you already know: there are numerous benefits associated with reading to children. When children are read to they develop stronger language and listening skills, a greater attention span, and a richer vocabulary when compared with children who are not read to. It is by being read to that children learn to read themselves, and raising a child who reads increases the child's potential for success in school and in life.

Given the link between early literacy skills and success in school and life, Wake County SmartStart has partnered with Motheread to offer literacy training in child care classrooms through an activity entitled L.I.N.K.S. (Literacy Invites and Nurtures Success). The partnership, created in October 2008, offers an opportunity to change literacy practices in child care classrooms, thereby improving the quality of child care centers and the school readiness of those children whose teachers participate in the project.

For over 20 years, Motheread, Inc. has been combining the teaching of literacy skills with child development and family empowerment issues. Through its L.I.N.K.S. activity, Motheread works with Wake County SmartStart's Quality Enhancement Initiative (QEI) to identify child care centers that would benefit from mentoring and literacy training. Child care centers outside of the QEI program are considered on a case-by-case basis, and typically, targeted centers have no more than 3 stars.

Once centers are identified for literacy training, the L.I.N.K.S. activity involves three components. First, a Motheread trainer observes the teachers as they interact with the children in a literacy activity. The trainer is able to pinpoint the teachers' strengths and areas for improvement. Next, the trainer hosts a group training for the teachers who will participate in L.I.N.K.S. And finally, the Motheread trainers mentor the teachers individually. The mentoring typically involves up to six classroom visits after the initial group training. Through L.I.N.K.S., Motheread trainers remain in a child care center for as long as three months, and work with more than one center simultaneously.

Should you wish to know more about Motheread, the L.I.N.K.S. activity, or have questions about whether your center is eligible to work with Motheread, contact the organization at (919) 781-2088 or jrmotheread@bellsouth.net.



Want to know more about classroom literacy activities or literacy skills building?

The following Wake County SmartStart-funded programs provide a range of literacy services for children and adults. Please contact these agencies directly should you wish to know more about the services they provide.

Literacy Council of Wake County's Project LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Families Together)

Contact: Laura Walters
Phone: (919) 787-5559
E-mail: lwalters@wakeliteracy.org

Motheread / Fatheread

Contact: Carolyn Dickens
Phone: (919) 781-2088
E-mail: cdmotheread@bellsouth.net

Telamon Corporation Family Literacy Program

Contact: Arvelis Byrd
Phone: (919) 856-5614
E-mail: abyrd@telamon.org

Wake County Public Libraries Bookmobile Services to Young Children: Stories Together

Contact: Judy Packer
Phone: (919) 212-9527
E-mail: judy.packer@co.wake.nc.us

Calendar of Events

Professional development opportunities, parenting classes and more

December 2008

Tuesday Dec. 9 The Potty Dilemma

5:00-6:00 p.m.

For parents who are thinking about or just beginning to potty train.

Hosted by Dhruvi Dholakia at Bright Horizons, 800 Corporation Drive, Raleigh
\$10 for one / \$15 for couples
(919) 744-8819 or dhruti@handsonlearning.us
for information or to RSVP.
www.handsonlearning.us

Thursday Dec. 18 Meaningful Interactions

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

This parent training focuses on how meaningful interactions foster children's language development and social and emotional growth.

Hosted by Dhruvi Dholakia at Wake County SmartStart, 1121 Situs Court, #250, Raleigh
\$10 for one / \$15 for couples.
(919) 744-8819 or dhruti@handsonlearning.us
for information or to RSVP.
www.handsonlearning.us

January 2009

Thursday Jan. 8 Math and the Young Child

1:00-3:00 p.m.

Come and learn how to be an intentional teacher of math. You'll learn about research and hands-on classroom activities.

Hosted by Project Enlightenment at St. Phillip Lutheran Preschool, Raleigh
mcrawley@wcpss.net or (919) 508-0811 for information.

Thursday Jan. 22 Sensory Issues with Preschoolers

7:00 -9:00 p.m.

Participants will become familiar with the different kinds of sensory issues (and behaviors related to those issues) which preschoolers might exhibit and strategies to address these issues.

mcrawley@wcpss.net or (919) 508-0811 for information.

January 2009

Friday Jan. 23 Guided Observation of the Family Literacy Classroom

8:30-11:30 a.m.

These guided observations are designed for teachers of 3 to 5-year-olds. Participants observe and discuss best practices of inclusion projects. Hosted by Project Enlightenment.

mcrawley@wcpss.net or (919) 508-0811 for information.

Wednesday Jan. 28 Toddlerhood: A Turbulent and Terrific Time

9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Toddlerhood can be challenging for any parent. This seminar is for parents with children 15 months to 3-years-old. Come learn "what makes toddlers tick." In this workshop we will discuss discipline, development and ways to communicate with a toddler. \$12 per person / \$18 per couple.

Jabrawell@wcpss.net or (919) 664 -7781 for information.

Market Rate Surveys are in the Mail

YOUR responses will determine subsidy rates for the next two years

If you manage or own a regulated child care facility, you should have received your Market Rate Survey at the end of November. If you have not yet done so, it is critically important that you fill out the survey and mail it back in.

The Division of Child Development (DCD) will use your responses to develop payment rates for subsidized child care. Your responses will help ensure that subsidy payment rates accurately reflect the private rates charged for higher levels of licensure and quality. For example, the results from the last two Market Rate Surveys (2005 and

2007) were used to increase the subsidy market rates in many counties in 2006 and 2007. All survey responses are kept confidential, i.e., DCD sees the collective survey results, but not any details specific to a particular provider.

Wake County SmartStart encourages you to complete and return your survey. If you did not receive a survey and wish to participate, contact Janice Fain at (919) 662-4535 or janice.fain@ncmail.net for more information. Your response does make a difference.

Building Block Briefs

Wake County SmartStart's communication is going electronic!

While in the past Wake County SmartStart has paid to print and mail our newsletters, with this issue of *Building Blocks*, we are moving to an electronic format. This change will allow us to preserve critical resources and reduce costs while enabling us to offer the same level of information.

Distributing the newsletter electronically will also allow you, our readers, to more easily share the publication with your peers. We encourage you to forward this newsletter to your colleagues, staff or friends in the child

care industry locally and across the state. Copies of past issues of *Building Blocks* are available via our Web site: www.wakesmartstart.org.

Our goal in producing *Building Blocks* is to provide our readership with information relative to the child care industry and to recognize the achievements of those in Wake County who do so much for our youngest. Should you ever have comments or questions regarding the newsletter, please let us know via e-mail or phone: info@wakesmartstart.org or (919) 851-9550.