

Smart Start of Wilkes

2008-2009 Annual Report

For the past 15 years, Wilkes Smart Start has helped our young children be healthy and start school ready to succeed . . .



Last year Wilkes County's Smart Start contributed over \$1.7 million into the local economy. Combining resources with the State of North Carolina, we helped pay for over 1,000 children to attend high quality child care, so that parents with low wages could be reliable employees. We offered resources to every early education provider in the county to help them improve the quality of their services.

**Located at 1006 F Street
North Wilkesboro, NC
(336-838-0977)**



www.wilkesmartstart.com

Improving the quality of child care for all children . . .

75% of child care teachers participate in Smart Start technical assistance

Research repeatedly shows high-quality early learning experiences place children on a path towards life success. Smart Start works to improve the quality of early childhood education in Wilkes County by helping assure that child care facilities are safe, that teachers are highly qualified, and that child care providers have the resources they need. We also educate parents about what to look for in a child care facility— whether they choose a center or a family child care home.



According to data from the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, a **childcare teacher in Wilkes County earns an average annual salary of \$16,100. In other words, the typical child care teacher is paid less than the poverty line for a family of three and just slightly over half what the average Wilkes County worker earns.** Wilkes County's Smart Start makes educational bonuses worth thousands of dollars available to teachers in centers and family child care homes.

80% of children in centers with teachers who received training by Smart Start showed improvement in social emotional skills.

*Spotlight:
Child Care
Teachers*

Early childhood teachers have the responsibility of nurturing the hearts and minds of our youngest children. Training and education help teachers know what milestones to expect and how best to prepare children for what faces them. Teachers learn techniques to better manage a roomful of children clamoring for attention. Not only does quality training make sense – research has confirmed that programs with the most highly trained teachers show impressive results both in the short-term and decades later as children grow up, make friends, do well in school, secure good-paying jobs and become solid citizens. **The National Research Council finds specific teacher training in early childhood for teachers is linked to positive outcomes for children.**

Wilkes County is fortunate that so many child care centers have chosen to place a real emphasis on quality care, including having highly trained teachers. Indeed, three out of four child care centers rank at least four stars out of five in the North Carolina Star Rated License System. But teachers in family child care homes, which often care for some of our youngest children and babies, can have the most need and least opportunity for education. Overall in North Carolina, just half of home care providers have more than a high school degree. Wilkes County's Smart Start has services specifically designed to help these teachers get additional support – ranging from training to prevent the spread of infectious disease and supplying a rotating selection of children's books, to making available technical assistance and training through Child Care Resource and Referral.

By providing opportunities for early childhood teachers to get training and support, Wilkes County's Smart Start improves formal child care for all of our county's young children.

Supporting families to be their child's first teacher . . .

249 parents participated in classes to improve their parenting skills

Wilkes County's Smart Start funds programs that teach parenting skills and encourage parents to share stories with their young children so that each child learns early reading skills.



Early Childhood Development

Scientific research has confirmed the brains of young children act like little sponges, absorbing everything they see and hear.

Brain scans show that when young children don't receive enough of the right kind of attention, their brains actually look different and have empty space where they should have neurons

Community Partners

Wilkes Family Resource Center: Wilkes Community College, Wilkes Department of Social Services, Goodwill Industries, Employment Security Commission, JobLink, United Way

Moravian Falls Family Resource Center : YMCA, Country Square Community Center, WCC

Child Health: Wilkes Pediatric Offices, Ophthalmologists, Audiologists, CDSA
Ready Schools: Wilkes County Public Schools

High Risk Mothers/Welcome Baby: Wilkes County Health Department, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, Obstetricians

Raising a Reader: Wilkes County Library, Volunteers for Wilkes Literacy

Child Care Resource and Referral: Wilkes DSS, All Child Care Facilities, Head Start, Pre K Programs

Parenting: Wilkes DSS, Tiffany's Place, Wilkes County Court System

Subsidized Child Care: Wilkes DSS and all Early Education Facilities

Encouraging healthy behaviors . . .

96% of children in child care have up to date immunizations

Children can have trouble in school if they aren't healthy and ready to learn. Wilkes County's Smart Start works to improve child health in a variety of ways, ranging from promoting pre-natal care and immunizations, to linking children with early intervention services and physicians, to encouraging healthy eating and exercise.



Increasing family self sufficiency . . .

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Wilkes Smart Start
1006 F Street
North Wilkesboro

(336-838-0977)

Over 200 families move toward family self sufficiency in Wilkes

Child Care Industry Good for Families Good for Business

The child care industry in North Carolina generates \$1.5 billion annually in gross receipts, more than the scientific research and development and wireless telecommunications industries. One in ten North Carolina workers have a child under age 6. When these parents don't have affordable, reliable child care, they often depend on a patchwork of arrangements that can fall through from time to time. One survey across a variety of industries found that almost half of working parents miss work due to a failure in child care arrangements. Another study found that child care breakdowns cost U.S. industries an estimated \$3 billion.

This year, Wilkes County's Smart Start served almost 1,600 parents, including:

- 791 parents received assistance finding child care through Child Care Resource and Referral;
- 249 parents were enrolled in parenting classes;
- 226 parents were provided services (adult education, financial literacy, etc.) to help move their families toward self-sufficiency;
- 178 parents were trained in specific techniques to improve the behavior of their children in pre-school now and elementary school later.

Children who grow up in poverty face far more obstacles in life. At Wilkes County's Smart Start, we help parents get the job skills and supports they need to get and keep a job.



We helped more than 200 parents receive needed education to obtain and keep a better paying job and health care services (including immunizations).

Quality early care and education is important for young children. But so is family income, healthy behaviors, and positive parenting. Wilkes County's Smart Start works with community leaders, providers, parents and others to make sure Wilkes' young children have a range of supports so they can start out healthy and ready to learn.