

Local Partnership For Children Planning New 'Smart Start' Push

BY SUSAN USHER

A lack of child development and parenting education for parents and others who care for children.

Too many children who start school without the skills they need to succeed.

Too many children starting school without proper immunizations from disease.

A lack of affordable, appropriate day care.

More children eligible for Head Start preschool than there is space available to serve them.

A lack of classroom space for pre-kindergarten classes.

Access to health care and other services for children hindered by lack of transportation, limited agency hours and money, and by bureaucratic tangles.

Do you share any of these concerns or others related to preschool-age children in Brunswick County?

If so, Brunswick County's Partnership For Children wants to involve you in efforts to obtain a "Smart Start" grant through the North Carolina Partnership for Children to develop a better way to deliver services needed by preschool children and their families.

An organizational meeting will be held Thursday, Aug. 4, at 5:30 p.m. in the Public Assembly Building at the Brunswick County Government Center at Bolivia. The history of Smart Start and the local project will be reviewed, along with the results of a recent needs and resources survey, and the next steps will be discussed.

While Brunswick County isn't necessarily a "shoo-in" for project funding, Chairman Lori Bates of Long Beach believes the local partnership stands a good chance of being one of the 12 projects funded this time around.

"Unless we blow it we should get this," she

said. "We should receive around \$900,000 to \$1 million."

Smart Start is Gov. Jim Hunt's package approach for improving human services for preschool children, to insure they are ready—in terms of physical, mental and emotional development—for a successful start in school.

In the first round of funding Brunswick County's package was ranked 18th, but only 12 projects were funded. Another 12 will be funded this September.

Bates said 50 counties are either close to incorporating a local partnership or are incorporated. Of those 20 are "active" in some fashion.

Since the first round of applications the local Partnership received funds from Brunswick County toward conducting a needs assessment to provide more accurate and specific data for planning purposes.

The local partnership operates under a 29-member board of directors. It has a 178-person mailing list and anticipates developing a working committee structure.

Brunswick County Partnership participants have developed a "wish list" of how it would like to address some of the local problems it has identified.

"One of the main things is a mobile pediatric van," said Bates. "It would travel into local communities at hours that are accessible to working parents and provide immunizations and perhaps other services. We think that is really important."

Also near the top of their list are more staff development for child care center workers and parenting skills classes.

"There are so many things to look at and try to deal with," said Bates. "One thing we've realized is that when you intend to help children you

have to work with the family."

Local parents, educators, churches, service providers, business people, all interested persons, will have a chance to discuss the needs of local preschool children and their families and possible solutions to those problems during a series of meetings in August.

After the Aug. 4 organizational meeting, a public meeting will be held each Thursday in August, also at 5:30 p.m. at the Public Assembly Building, to make sure all viewpoints are incorporated into the Smart Start proposal.

On Tuesday evenings a team of volunteers will work on drafting and refining the actual application package.

Last year the Smart Start initiative involved more than 100 people from all walks of life and representing a broad range of community agencies and organizations. This year, said Bates, the Partnership wants at least 200 people involved.

Those who cannot attend the Aug. 4 meeting but would like more information can contact Bates at 278-6210.

Meeting Sat. Morning For North Bruns. Soccer

North Brunswick High School students interested in playing on the soccer team this fall are asked to attend a meeting Saturday at 9 a.m. at Northwest Township Park.

Coach Randy Collins said prospective team members will be filling out paperwork at the meeting. All players will be required to get a physical before the first practice.

Anyone who cannot attend the meeting or needs more information can call Collins at 371-3665.

New BCC Program Seeks To Boost Skills Of Jobless; Underemployed

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick Community College will begin offering a pre-job training program sometime this fall designed to help unemployed and underemployed workers get jobs or gain skills for future jobs.

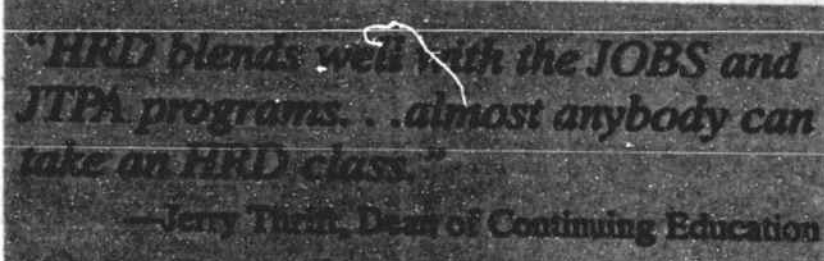
With a start-up budget of \$100,611, BCC was one of 14 campuses chosen as new Human Resources Development (HRD) program sites. That will bring the total to 55 campuses throughout the state.

"This was unexpected," said Dean of Continuing Education Jerry Thrift, who will administer the program. Department of Community College requests to fund additional HRD sites had been considered and rejected in the past. "We occasionally get a good surprise."

Thrift said it is doubtful that the new program will be operating by the start of fall quarter on Sept. 6, but estimates it will be start sometime this fall.

Thrift has past experience overseeing an HRD program and said the state Department of Community Colleges is ready to assist as well.

"It shouldn't take us too long to get started," he said. "We'll probably be hiring a full-time director



But HRD is not the type of thing that has to operate on a quarter system.

Through HRD students are taught how to look for jobs and how to function as productive employees.

"HRD blends well with the JOBS and JTPA programs," said Thrift, two programs that also have vocational preparation and job placement as their goals, but are open only to specific target groups such as welfare recipients or the disadvantaged. "Almost anybody can take an HRD class."

Statewide a total of 29,622 HRD graduates gained employment during a 17-year period ending with the 1991-92 school year, including 2,012 in 1991-92.

While all HRD programs must provide pre-vocational orientation and motivational training, additional

course content is developed and modified according to the employment needs of each local community.

"We can customize classes to meet county needs," said Thrift. "However we need a market for whatever we're upgrading people to."

Typical instruction includes assessing students' attitudes, personal appearance, interpersonal behavior and personal, educational and career

goals. Students typically work to develop skills in problem-solving, communication and employability, such as completing a job application, preparing a resume and handling job interviews.

Instruction can also include short-term skills training and basic academic instruction.

Graduates receive follow-up services for 12 months after they complete the program, with staff members monitoring progress and checking to see if additional training or counseling is needed.

HRD programs are evaluated on the basis of their graduates, the number of students completing the program, placed in job or training programs. Increases in earned income and decreases in public assistance for graduates are compared to training costs as a measure of program efficiency.

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