

## OUR SCHOOLS

### SCHOOL BRIEFS

#### Smart Start offers help

Child Care Resource and Referral of Brunswick County has funds available to assist persons in becoming licensed family child care home providers.

This financial assistance is made available through Smart Start and includes the cost of several safety items that are required by the state to open a licensed family child care home as well as the cost of the state application.

Child Care Resource and Referral also is offering technical assistance in filling out the application and in other aspects of the licensing process.

Newly licensed family child care home providers will then be eligible for other services, such as access to a resource and toy lending library, monthly trainings and opportunities to participate in quality improvement projects.

For more information about starting a family child care home, persons may call Shannon at 1-877-422-7710.

#### Southport Domino's cards

Southport Elementary School's Parent-Teacher Association still has Domino's platinum cards available for sale.

The card entitles the bearer to a free pizza for each one that is purchased. The card has no expiration date.

Folks interested in purchasing the card may send a check for \$10 per card, made payable to "SES PTA," along with a name and address, to: Southport Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association; c/o Satu Harris, fund-raising; 701 West 9th Street; Southport, NC 28461-2918.

#### Health Choice re-enrollment

Brunswick County parents whose children have had N. C. Health Choice insurance for one year should re-enroll for Health Choice for the next 12 months if they have not already done so.

Re-enrollment forms are available at the Department of Social Services in Bolivia. Application forms are available at the county health department, local schools, the Health Check office, the Partnership for Children office in Shallotte and offices of family physicians.

The N. C. Health Choice program provides free or low-cost health insurance for children up to age 19 who have no other medical insurance. For more information, call 755-8082.

#### Dental Task Force to begin

The Brunswick County Partnership for Children will be starting the year 2000 with a new resolution — that "all children enter school with a healthy smile."

While this may seem like a small thing to some parents, for many in Brunswick County, this is an increasing problem.

The N. C. Children's Index found in its last study that 24 percent of children in North Carolina enter school with untreated dental decay. In Brunswick County, almost double that number — 46 percent — enter school with dental decay.

That number is large for several reasons: Children are not seen by a dentist at an early age, parents have a lack of education about early dental needs, and transportation issues often result in missed appointments.

Brunswick County Partnership for Children is inviting anyone from the community who is interested in becoming a member of the Dental Task Force to attend a forum from 9 to 11 a.m. January 14 at Brunswick Community College in the multipurpose room of the "A" building.

For more information or to reserve a spot, persons may call Renee Schrom at 754-3166.



Photo submitted by Judy Auman

Kushana Ballard and her child TyLequa Ballard of Leland enjoyed some of the activities at the Parents as Teachers Program developmental seminar earlier this month. Activity baskets are placed on each table for parents and children to use at Parents as Teachers meetings.

#### Parents as Teachers

### Seminar helps young families

Parents of children up to five years of age attended a developmental seminar sponsored by Brunswick County Schools' Parents as Teachers Program on Monday, December 6, at Supply Elementary School.

Parents were invited to view the display of homemade toys for all developmental ages and enjoyed refreshments prior to the presentation.

Donna Vaught, developmental psychologist and director of the Full Potential program in New Hanover

County, gave a presentation on "How to Optimize Brain Development from Birth to Five Years."

Vaught's presentation provided parents with the latest information on brain research and tips for recognizing when their young child is ready for stimulating experiences and activities.

Lorene H. Williams, director of federal programs, welcomed the families and thanked them for their participation in the program. She addressed the importance of involvement in their

young child's life at an early age and stated her appreciation for the Parents as Teachers instructors who work to empower families.

Parents as Teachers is a Smart Start program.

The seminar was sponsored by the following businesses: Little Professor Book Center in Southport, Wal-Mart of Shallotte, Domino's of Southport, Western Sizzlin of Southport, Joe's Barbecue of Shallotte and Brad's Grill of Bolivia.

#### Tips from experts

### Choosing care for your child

Brunswick County Partnership for Children

One of the most critical decisions working parents have to make is who will take care of their children. While this can be a difficult task, the Brunswick County Partnership for Children wants to help by offering a few tips.

When choosing child care for their children, parents are confronted with all kinds of decisions: A child care center or home? A location near work or near home? Does the facility's hours match my work schedule? How much will it cost?

With all of these concerns, it takes a dedicated parent to take the next step and ask important questions about the quality of child care their child will receive: Will my child be comforted when sad? Will my child be safe? Will my child have fun? Will my child learn?

It is a goal of Smart Start to improve the quality of child care in North Carolina. One of the best ways to achieve this is to help parents learn about quality care and help them learn to demand the best for their child.

Child Care Resources and Referral of Brunswick County can help parents locate child care facilities, but more importantly, it can help parents become educated in this area. The following is a list of things to ask when choosing child care:

- Is the atmosphere pleasant and caring? Do people, including the children, talk to one another? Are there lots of smiles and laughs?
- What is the ratio of caregivers to children? Is each child getting affection and nurturing?

- Does the program respond to each child as an individual or is the child expected to conform to the program?

- What is the training and experience of the caregivers that will be looking after your child? Do they understand child development?

- How long have the caregivers worked in the program? Can your child expect consistent care from the caregivers?

- Is there support for parent involvement? Are parents encouraged to visit?

- Are the children engaged in experiences that facilitate exploration and learning? Are there opportunities to learn through play?

- Are indoor and outdoor areas safe?

- Are there clean, easily accessible bathroom areas?

- Are furnishings child size? Are the toys appropriate for each child's age?

Do not be shy about visiting child care centers and homes or asking for references. Remember that as a parent, the decision about what child care to use is yours.

For more information, persons may contact Child Care Resource and Referral of Brunswick County at 755-3362.

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