

Smart Start helps parents teach children

Experts agree a child's development begins at home, in the formative preschool years.

Foremost, it is the parents who serve as teacher from day one. This can be a challenging task for parents who are themselves young, or alone, or who have a special needs child.

The Parents As Teachers (PAT) program is designed to assist and strengthen such families who need a helping hand. It is targeted to meet the needs of families with infants and preschoolers. The program is free and open to all families.

Offered as a program of Smart Start and delivered through United Family Services, Parents as Teachers is part of a national program. It currently serves 250 to 300 families in Cleveland County.

Once a month one of five trained educators visits in a family's home. Program administrator Pat St. Charles outlines the many roles the educator may play once in the home environment. The one part-time and four full-time educators are there to help make the parents more comfortable with child rearing, to help them relax so that bonding between parents and child can occur.

"We help parents know what to do with a child," says Ms. St. Charles. This help can range from bathing techniques to helping parents identify what different cries are indicating, to support with potty training. "Parents become much more comfortable about what they are doing," she adds.

"It really makes you feel good knowing that others are so interested in the welfare of all children - that there is someone to help us parents assure that our children develop the way they should so they can be happy, centered, productive adults. I remember the love I felt when someone cared enough for my child and me to help us learn," commented one parent.

Educators provide parents with age appropriate information about their child, perform screenings to determine the child's developmental status and give assistance with medical questions. Language development is promoted by encouraging parents to talk to and read to their child. Vision, hearing and speech development problems are often detected and the child referred to the appropriate specialist.

An educator's visit also includes the pick up and delivery

CCC Dean's List for spring quarter

Cleveland Community College students named to the Dean's List for the spring quarter are listed below. Full-time students (12 or more quarter hours) achieving a grade point average of 3.5 are selected.

Grover - Michael David Mull.
Kings Mountain - Amy Lynn Camp, Shanna Shenne Clinton, Heather Anne Ely, Sereta Ayers Ledbetter, Roger Douglas Moss, Heather Lembke Rounds, Michael William White.

Lawndale - Hai Thanh Falor, Viki Biegler McKinney, Melanie Donita Sweezy.

Moss receives degree from School of the Arts

Laura E. Moss, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Moss of El Bethel Road, Kings Mountain, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of Drama during recent commencement exercises at North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem.

Two hundred and thirteen students received 11 master's and 66 bachelor's degrees, 13 College Arts diplomas and 123 high school diplomas.

of toys from the toy loan program. Toys, books and games that are appropriate to a child's age are taken into the home and the educator encourages play and interaction between the parent and child. If needed, such equipment and supplies as baby beds, bottles and diapers may also be provided.

A family's participation in Smart Start's Parents as Teachers program is strictly voluntary. Referrals are often made through the local health department, hospitals and the Department of Social Services.

Ms. St. Charles stresses, how-

ever, that Parents As Teachers is not an arm of DSS and that families may refuse offers of service. No reports are made on the family, with the exception of abuse.

A child's development is the main focus of Parents As Teachers. One of the program's goals, explains Ms. St. Charles, is that a child is ready to learn when he enters kindergarten. She is quick to note that a child who has developmental problems identified in the preschool years has a head start. "We see ourselves as advocates for the child and the parent," says Ms.

St. Charles.

Smart Start, which is administered locally by the Cleveland County Partnership for Children, is a network of services for children through age 5. The mission is to help every child reach kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. Cleveland County is among 36 North Carolina counties to benefit from the Smart Start program. For information concerning Smart Start, call Executive Director Ted Hall at 484-0096. For information on Parents as Teachers, call Pat St. Charles at 487-1278.



PAT educator Michelle Tolbert, left, works with Andrea Campbell and her son Christopher.

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Dinner Franks

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ea.

large head Harvest Fresh Green or Red Crispy

Leaf Lettuce

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Steak Sauce

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