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## County child care centers earn grants

Five child care facilities in Richmond County have earned quality enhancement grants from the Richmond County Partnership for Children. The grants are designed to help facilities improve their program and achieve a higher quality rating.

“Quality of care at child care centers is very important to parents who are entrusting the daily care of their child to others,” said Martha Vance Brown, executive director of the Partnership. “Parents want to feel secure in the knowledge that their chosen facility is providing not only quality physical and emotional care, but also educational and developmental activities.

“Directors and teachers agree that ongoing program enhancement is critical to quality child care, but it’s difficult for centers to have the funds to improve quality without raising rates,” Vance Brown said. “Quality enhancement grants provide the funding and expertise to help centers improve quality without raising fees.”

Darlene Burris, quality enhancement coordinator, assesses each facility’s program strengths and needs, then develops an implementation plan to help the facility achieve a higher star rating when they are reassessed by the state. The star rating system recognizes providers for higher quality care. Parents use the star rating system as they select a quality care program for their child.

The state Division of Child Development issues licenses to all eligible child care centers and family child care homes. Facilities receive one to five stars, with one star meaning that a program meets North Carolina’s minimum licensing standards. Programs that choose to voluntarily meet higher standards can apply for a two to five star license, which is based on staff education and program standards.

Local quality enhancement grants also include workshops and training sessions for each facility’s staff



as well as purchased materials to augment the program. A staff education incentive also may be awarded to facilities that meet additional eligibility criteria.

Centers earning grants this year are Kids Crossing, Kids Zone, Margie’s Treasure Chest Too, Romper Room and Sandy’s Creative Kids.

Last year, six organizations participated in the program, receiving more than \$58,000 in materials and staff incentives in addition to program analysis, staff training, plan development and implementation support. Participants were Country Day Care Infant, Country Day Care Inc., Country Day Care School, Precious Hands Family Child Care Home, Gingerbread Day Care and Kidz Konstruction.

For more information about the quality enhancement grant program, contact Burris at 910.997.3773, ext 26.