



Smart Start of New Hanover County Awarded \$21,770 Grant from PNC Foundation to Enhance the Quality of Early Care and Education for Pre-Schoolers in Need

Contact: Janet Nelson, Executive Director, Smart Start of New Hanover County
(910) 815-3731, or Janet.nelson@newhanoverkids.org

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Smart Start of New Hanover County has received a \$21,770 grant from the PNC Foundation for its *Stacking Up the Stars: Early Childhood Professional Development Project*. Research clearly indicates that the outcomes for children are directly related to the education of the caregiver. This project helps ensure that the most vulnerable children in our community have the best possible learning experience, by helping to reduce disparities in teacher education and competence in the community.

The *Stacking Up the Stars Project* will provide community college scholarships through the Cape Fear Community College Foundation for individuals teaching infants and toddlers in child care centers serving children receiving child care subsidy. The project will also work to advance the expertise of those offering mentoring and training to individuals working in child care.

Janet Nelson, Executive Director of Smart Start of New Hanover County stated, “The focus on teacher education is a critical component to ensure that children in early care receive the highest quality of care.”

The grant from the PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. (NYSE: PNC), will allow Smart Start of New Hanover County to offer \$12,000 in scholarships for Early Childhood Education students. This will cover the cost of tuition, fees, and books for five teachers. Teachers will be selected according to the age of the

children taught, the star level license of the child care center where employed, number of children enrolled receiving child care subsidy, and the evidence of the applicants' commitment to the field of early childhood education. Once selected, participants will be assigned a mentor from the Smart Start PUZZLES Center training staff to assist them with college enrollment process and the establishment of strong study habits. The mentor will also check in with the student on a frequent basis to offer support and help ensure success. This project has the potential to impact as many as 90 young children immediately.

To learn more about the PNC Grow Up Great initiative, go to www.pncgrowupgreat.com. Follow PNC at www.twitter.com/PNCNews and www.youtube.com/PNC

About the Organizations

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a \$350 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. For more information, please visit www.pncgrowupgreat.com and www.youtube.com/PNC or follow @PNCGrowUpGreat on Twitter.

The earliest years of childhood are critical. Experiences during this time literally shape the structure of the brain. Because today's children are tomorrow's leaders, parents and workers, everyone has a stake in making sure all children have the experiences they need to thrive. Smart Start is the system that brings together all the people involved in a young child's life—families, teachers, doctors, caregivers, social workers, and many others—to ensure every child has all they need for healthy growth and development. For more information, visit www.newhanoverkids.org.

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