



News Release

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Wake County SmartStart to Present at North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference

Speakers will promote aspects of a quality childcare environment

RALEIGH, N.C. – In its continuing commitment to ensuring quality childcare in Wake County, five early childhood education professionals from Wake County SmartStart will present three workshops during the 2009 North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children (NCAEYC) annual conference. All three workshops will take place on Friday, October 2 at the new Raleigh Convention Center in downtown Raleigh. The five WCSS speakers represent over 90 years combined experience in the childcare industry.

Gina Soceanu, Amanda Kowski and Nicole Burke will present *Imaginative Play: The Key to Academic Success* at 12:15 p.m. “As a former childcare director and teacher, I recognize the importance of play in the childcare setting. This workshop gives teachers practical applications that allow them to incorporate play into their centers,” explains Soceanu. In *Designing Environments – How to Design a Quality Based Family Child Care Environment*, also at 12:15 p.m., Stephanie Jenkins will share how different child care spaces can be arranged to suit varying circumstances, preferences and needs. “Participants will learn to create a childcare environment that will meet their own varying circumstances,” shares Jenkins. Through *Oops I Did It Again: Strategies to Avoid Common Hiring Mistakes*, presented by Wanda Fowler at 2 p.m., participants will learn common hiring mistakes, as well as strategies and techniques to help prevent those mistakes so administrators find just the right people and place them in the right positions in their centers. “Hiring new employees is like walking into the great unknown and nothing is more frustrating than the moment you realize the latest hire is not the stellar employee you had hoped to find,” explains Fowler.

All five speakers work in Wake County SmartStart’s Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative (QEI and QMI), through which child care facilities receive a variety of services including consultation, training, and technical assistance at no cost to the facility. Through QEI and QMI, WCSS works with one to three star child care centers and family child care homes to improve both the quality and level of care for children and the level of education for staff in those facilities, as well as with four and five star facilities to assist them in maintaining their higher level of care and licensure.

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About the Speakers

Nicole Burke

Nicole, of Cary, has spent 10 years in childcare, the last three of which have been with WCSS. She has worked as a teacher and assistant director in childcare. Nicole has a bachelor's degree in human services and is working on her master's degree in education.

Wanda Fowler

Having spent over 20 years in early childhood education as a teacher, director and instructor, Wanda, of Apex, has a wealth of experience in making the right hiring choices to ensure a quality childcare environment. In addition to her work at WCSS, she is an early childhood education instructor at Wake Technical Community College. Wanda has a bachelor's degree in human development / family studies.

Stephanie Jenkins

With over 20 years in childcare as a teacher and director, Stephanie, of Zebulon, is well-qualified to address the relationship between environment and quality in a childcare setting. Stephanie has worked as a teacher and a director in private childcare, Head Start and the public school system. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Amanda Kowski

Raleigh resident Amanda has spent 15 years in childcare, the last four of which have been with WCSS. Prior to joining WCSS, she has worked as both a teacher and assistant director childcare. Amanda has a bachelor's degree in both biology and child development and is working on a master's degree in education.

Gina Soceanu

With 27 years of experience both as a teacher and director in child care, Gina, of Apex, is well-versed in all areas of quality childcare. Gina has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in counseling.

About Wake County SmartStart

Wake County SmartStart is a nonprofit organization committed to ensuring every child in Wake County, birth to 5, is prepared for success in school and life. Created in 1996, Wake County SmartStart works to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of child care settings, provide preventive health and early intervention services and offer family support services. The organization also promotes, supports, and advocates for the needs of young children living in Wake County. For more information about Wake County SmartStart, its partners and projects, visit www.wakesmartstart.org or call (919) 851-9550.

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