



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2008

Wake County SmartStart Welcomes New Board Members

New members are united in their commitment to ensuring Wake County's children, birth to age 5, are healthy and prepared for success in school and life

RALEIGH, NC – At its October 22, 2008 meeting, the Wake County SmartStart board of directors welcomed five community leaders to its board. Arvelis Byrd, Shirley Herndon, Giang Le, Michael Smith, M.D., and Jerraé Williams joined the board, effective immediately. "Wake County SmartStart is delighted to welcome these distinguished individuals to our board of directors," stated Michael Weisel, Wake County SmartStart board chair. "Each brings unique insight and experience to our board, and is passionate about supporting Wake County's birth to 5-year-old population. I have no doubt they will lead us to further achievements and growth in the years ahead," added Weisel.

Arvelis Byrd, a recent transplant to Raleigh from Nevada, is the director of North Carolina Head Start, which is operated by [Telamon Corporation](#). For the past seven years, she worked with Nevada's Community Services Agency Head Start team, starting out as operations manager. She was ultimately promoted to assistant director. While at Head Start in Nevada, she was involved in managing the child development program budget, preparing and coordinating the federal review process, ensuring program monitoring and federal compliance, managing the development and implementation of internal policies and procedures for the CSA Head Start Program, and facilitating the Policy Council training.

Cary resident **Shirley Herndon** has spent her adult life improving the lives of children. She received a bachelor's degree in home economics and a master's degree in education from North Carolina Central University. She spent 32 years with the Wake County Public School System as a teacher and assistant principal. Upon retirement in 2000, Ms. Herndon opened [Bright Beginnings](#), a child care center in Cary. It is here she works to equip her youngest clients with the skills they need to transition smoothly to kindergarten.

Giang Le, originally from Vietnam, has worked for [Wake County Human Services](#) for 30 years where her education in public health and public administration has been of tremendous value. She works as Program Manager for Children, Youth and Family Services with Wake County Human Services. An active community volunteer, she is passionate about and committed to advocating for the health, safety, and well-being of children and families.

Shortly after his arrival in the Triangle area in 1984, Cary resident **Michael Smith, M.D.** opened his pediatric practice, [Western Wake Pediatrics](#), which was, at that time, the third pediatric practice in Cary. According to Dr. Smith, Wake County SmartStart works to address issues he has faced in his more than 25 years of pediatrics. If there is to be any kind of impact on children and their ability to succeed in school, intervention must occur very early in life, and he supports Wake County SmartStart's focus on the birth to 5-year-old age group.

Minnesota native and Raleigh resident **Jerraé Williams** relocated to the Triangle area eight years ago after receiving a bachelor's degree in public administration (with a minor in finance) from St. Cloud State University and a master's degree in business administration from Capella University. She is Manager of Treasury Services for the [City of Raleigh](#). Previously, she worked in community development and government banking where her clients represented governments, institutions of higher education, non-profits and kindergarten through 12 educational organizations.

Wake County SmartStart is a non-profit organization that works to ensure every child in Wake County, birth to 5, is prepared for success in school and life. For more information about Wake County SmartStart, its partners or its projects, visit www.wakesmartstart.org or call (919) 851-9550.

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