



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: 8-26-10  
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## **Smart Start Program Teaches Family Reading and Brings Books into Homes**

*Harnett County Partnership for Children Receives Grant to provide  
Raising A Reader locally*

Lillington, NC– Once again the Harnett County Partnership for Children (HCPC) will be offering Harnett County families an early literacy program proven to increase time spent reading to young children. Raising A Reader is a national literacy program for children birth to five that fosters parent-child bonding and brain development to prepare children for success in school. The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., the organization that leads Smart Start, has recently awarded this grant to the Harnett County Partnership for Children.

“The Raising a Reader program has been successfully operating in Harnett County for two years and has served over 300 families” stated Tiffany McConnell, Program Manager for HCPC. “Parents are reporting that their child is excited about the books they receive each week and want their parents to read the books to them right away.”

Nearly half of all U.S. children enter school without the early reading skills necessary to succeed in school. To address this challenge, Smart Start offers Raising A Reader to child care centers in communities with a proven need for an early literacy program. As part of the program, children receive bags with books to take home. Books are rotated among children and families weekly. The center also hosts weekly reading sessions and at least four workshops a year to teach families book-sharing strategies. Children take a trip to the library and are encouraged to get their first library card.

Smart Start has been implementing the program in counties across the state for the past three years. Last year alone, Smart Start Raising A Reader programs helped 831 families in 63 classrooms across 9 counties learn how to effectively read with their children to promote literacy skills.

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*HCPC is a non-profit organization with the mission to improve the quality of life for young children and families in Harnett County. Funds through Smart Start are used to improve the quality of child care, make child care more affordable and accessible, and to provide access to health services and family support. Smart Start has achieved tremendous results in these areas and continues to strive to reach all children in North Carolina. For further information on Smart Start in Harnett County please contact at HCPC at (910) 893-2344 or [www.harnettsmartstart.org](http://www.harnettsmartstart.org)*