

# CONNECTED for kids

November 2006



DEDICATED TO THE  
SUCCESS OF CHILDREN  
IN CENTRE COUNTY



## From the Executive Director:

Fall is a time of change, and Smart Start has a few to announce. We have a new staff member, **Theresa Dougherty**.

Theresa is a recent Penn State graduate in journalism, who volunteered for Smart Start all summer, and is now our Administrative Assistant. Theresa brings considerable writing, editing, and administrative skills to our operation. She replaces **Edie Kiratzis**, who was Project Coordinator and Administrative Assistant since January, 2005. Edie continues her work as an independent evaluator, and is pursuing studies related to Early Intervention. Fortunately, she will remain active in Smart Start as a volunteer.

Two of our action committees have new leaders. **Beth Van Horn** and **Chutney Arrington** will co-chair the Health and Nutrition Action Committee. They succeed the dynamic 2005-2006 Chair **Maryanne Neal**. The new co-chairs for the Early Childhood Mental Health Action Committee are long-time committee members and community leaders **Wendy Whitesell** and **Shirl Smith**. Wendy and Shirl take the baton from the accomplished and effective co-chairs for the last five years, **Pamela Cole** and **Susan Drenning**. (To learn about the new leaders and the new committee goals for 2006-2007, see elsewhere in this publication.)

Overall goals for Smart Start for the coming year will emphasize three areas of concentration:

**COMPETENCE**—working with medical and mental health communities to ensure that children receive excellent physical and mental health support throughout early childhood.

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## JOHNSTON INTRODUCES A WEST COAST MODEL FOR MEETING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

—by Wendy Whitesell

Kadija Johnston

On August 22, Smart Start was true to form by bringing in Kadija Johnston to address Smart Start's ECMH action committee's interest in mental health consultation for child care programs. She represents 20 years of research in developing a system to meet the needs of San Francisco's child care programs. We have been continually confounded by the fact that a child's unmet social emotional needs are played out in our classrooms, and have attempted to attack this issue from many angles without finding the best answer. Kadija delivered.

The programs in the San Francisco area provide mental health support to families through child care programs. This support is identified not only for a child's diagnosed mental health needs, but also by relationship difficulties acted out in a classroom. Current services address a diagnosable child need; those not diagnosable can be identified through relationships that exist between teachers, children and their families.

This model is based on understanding current conditions in childcare, recognizing the relational experience, and acknowledging the sphere of adults involved. Clinical therapists then consult with a center's director, teachers, and the family to improve the system's functioning.

What we know is that mental health consultation improves a provider's ability to understand the meaning of children's behaviors, respond appropriately and effectively to children in distress, and communicate with parents for resolution. Currently, one funding source in California

has been for improving the overall quality of child care. Numerous funding sources are necessary to support such an in-depth. Dedication of this money was strongly supported by childcare directors and the efficacy of the consultation model has been supportive of their move to a higher level of quality.



Three years ago, Centre County had such an opportunity with a local grant, but since has toiled with funding and implementing such a program. The unique range of work of Kadija and her colleagues was fascinating to the attendees at the August presentation. Our community's interest in this program, its process, and funding needs left us with much advocacy to be done to realize this model locally. Support from local childcare directors, their teachers and families are critical to accomplishing our community's mental health goals.

*Wendy Whitesell, new co-chair of the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Committee and Director of the Bennett Family Center at Penn State has for years been a strong advocate of mental health consultation to child care facilities to support the social and emotional needs of children through the adults who care for them. She shares her perspectives on distinguished guest speaker, Kadija Johnston's recent visit to State College.*

**Executive Director continued . . .**

**TRANSITION**—ensuring that child care programs, kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and parents are on the same page with what each needs to do to get children ready for school.

**RESOURCES FOR QUALITY**—building motivation and resources for stronger investments in early childhood, recognizing that everyone's future is impacted (for good or ill) by the quality of young lives.

If you are interested in contributing your time, resources, and/or expertise to these goals, we invite you to participate. Our action committees meet every month. Call the Smart Start office to get the meeting details, or to discuss with me. I welcome your input.

Eileen Wise

**2006 SPEAKER SERIES A SUCCESS – A Recap**

This year, the Early Childhood Mental Health action committee presented its "Building Bridges to Cooperation" Speaker Series. During these workshops three distinguished speakers brought programs to share with Centre County. This year's series focused on mental health for preschoolers, following closely on the heels of the previous two years' topics, infants in 2004 and toddlers in 2005. There were 139 total attendees representing seven different disciplines including: child care providers, mental health and social service professionals, early intervention, legislators, educators, and parents. These individuals directly impact the lives of over 400 children and indirectly over 35,000. Of those who completed evaluations, all found the content to be valuable and useful.

**Dr. Cheryl McNeil** is Associate Professor of Psychology for the Clinical Child program at West Virginia University. She presented a day-long workshop, "Discipline Strategies that Really Work!" on Saturday, May 6. Speaking to about 70 people, she discussed techniques for dealing with behavioral issues faced by those who regularly work with young children. The session also included a hands-on approach to learning specific techniques, including: labeled praise, when-then techniques, and two-choices signal.



"Mental Health Consultation in Child Care" was presented by **Kadija Johnston, L.C.S.W.**, on August 22. This session, attended by approximately 50 people, focused on the benefits of Johnston's program, the Infant-Parent Program/Daycare Consultants, University of California in San Francisco. This program provides one-on-one mental health care for children in child care settings. With more children spending increasing time in child care, the approach also focused on improving the relationship between a child and his or her caregiver. Johnston's visit included a special session during the Early Childhood Mental Health Action committee meeting the next day on how to implement a similar program in the State College/ Centre County area.



**Celene Domitrovich**, Assistant Director for the Prevention Research Center at Penn State, presented "Social and Emotional Skills for Preschoolers," on September 23. Speaking to a crowd of over 40 people, Domitrovich discussed curriculum techniques for those teaching preschool children. Her approach focused on the use of the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) program, which was originally developed for elementary school students, but adapted for younger children as a way of teaching emotional skills, self-control, social awareness and problem-solving skills.



*Thanks to all of our sponsors and partners who made it possible for Smart Start to host this year's outstanding speakers.*

**STARS CORNER**

Centre County has a new STARS Manager. Barbara Parker comes from a background in Head Start, and has recently moved to central Pennsylvania from Arizona. Barbara welcomes questions, and can be reached at (800) 346-3020 Ext. 9726 or by email at [bpparker@stepcorp.org](mailto:bpparker@stepcorp.org)

Beth Simon, former STARS Manager for Centre County, is moving to a different assignment. We wish her the best of luck in her new counties.

**KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**Nichol E. Sheridan:**  
*Chair of newly created Communications Committee*  
Nichol is the director of the Child Care Information Services

(CCIS) of Centre County. Funded entirely by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Child Development, CCIS is the state's designated child care resource and referral agency serving families from birth through adolescence. In addition, CCIS provides financial assistance for quality early care and education programs plus summer school-age programs for families that qualify. A member of Smart Start since its inception, Nichol also participates on several other committees. She is a board member of the Centre County Council for Human Services and is involved with the Easterly Parkway PTO, Stand for Children and the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. The Communications Committee is in the process of formulating its goals.



**Wendy J. Whitesell:**  
*Co-Chair, Early Childhood Mental Health Action Committee*

Wendy has been the director of the Bennett Family Center at Penn State since 1994 as it moved from St. Paul's church downtown, to Cedar Building on campus and was part of the design team of the Bennett Family Child Care Center. She spent 8 years working at Cen-Clear Child Services in

# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

## DECEMBER

- 5 Parent Information/Discussion Series: Balancing Family Life, Park Forest Elementary School. Call 231-1062 or e-mail cjk12@scasd.org. (Child care is available by advance registration.)
- 11 Early Childhood Series (Level I): Creative Curriculum. Cost is \$30 for a one-day, 5-hour session. Matternville Preschool Center, State College. Call Karen Coulter at 800-982-3375 ext. 3018, or kcoulter@ciu10.com
- 14 PA Director Credential Program, S-136 Henderson Building, Penn State. Call Joyce Reed at 814-865-7951 for info
- 15 Early Childhood Series (Level II): Early Childhood Networking and Creating Hands-On Literacy and Math Materials. Cost is \$30 for a one day, 5-hour session. Central Intermediate Unit, West Decatur. Contact Karen Coulter at 800-982-3375 ext 3018, or kcoulter@ciu10.com.

## JANUARY

- 16 Early Childhood Series (Level II): Practical Strategies for Dealing with Behavioral Issues and Disorders. Cost is \$30 for a one-day, 5-hour session. Central Intermediate Unit, West Decatur. Call Karen Coulter at 800-982-3375 ext. 3018, kcoulter@ciu10.com
- 23 Early Childhood Series (Level 1): Introduction to Child Development and Behavior. Cost is \$30 for a one-day, 5-hour session, Central Intermediate Unit, West Decatur. Call Karen Coulter at 800-982-3375 ext. 3018, kcoulter@ciu10.com
- 27 Early Years Are Learning Years: Professional Development Conference, Penn State, call Beth Van Horn at 814-355-4897

## FEBRUARY

- 24 Focus on Families Conference, Mt. Nittany Middle School. For more information, call the Smart Start office at 814-238-0331.

## SMART START COMMITTEES SET THEIR GOALS FOR 2006-07

### PARENTING & LITERACY

- Maintain production/distribution of kindergarten calendar
- Evaluate success of Baby Book Bag Project and determine whether to continue it
- Participate in One Book Every Young Child initiative
- Partner with Early Care & Education Committee on various efforts

### HEALTH & NUTRITION

- Promote the health and wellness of Centre County children ages 0-6
- Provide educational and informative health and nutrition resources to children and families of Centre County
- Identify gaps in health and nutrition services, seek funding and develop projects

### EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

- Support the Transition to Kindergarten process for all children, families and child care
- Collaborate with Parenting & Literacy Committee to form linkages with the five school districts in Centre County
- Support child care directors in professional development and networking

### EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- Continue Early Childhood Mental Health Speaker Series for providers, parents, and mental health professionals.
- Develop, plan, and obtain funding for Mental Health Consultation to child care facilities in Centre County

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS cont'd . . .

their Head Start program and last served as the Social Services Coordinator for the agency. She worked for 4 years designing and opening a for-profit center here in Centre County. Throughout this time she has also been a consultant for Region III Head Start. She has worked with Smart Start Centre County as a NAEYC Accreditation Consultant; been responsible for creating and presenting group workshops for CIU 10 School Age Child Care Association (SACCA); and has presented at numerous conferences throughout Pennsylvania. She holds a B.S. in Special Education and an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education.



**Shirl (Shirley) Smith:** Co-chair, Early Childhood Mental Health Action Committee

Shirl has been involved with education and human services for over 25 years. She has been employed by Cen-Clear Child Services for 19 years. Prior to her role on the administrative team, she was a Teacher/Home Visitor in the Head Start Program and an Advisor for the Pennsylvania Transition Project. Shirl has been the Early Head Start Director since its inception, and also supervises the Early Intervention Program serving infants and toddlers with disabilities. She has served on state focus groups targeting the infant/toddler population. Shirl holds a B.S. degree in Elementary and Kindergarten Education from Penn State. She is a certified trainer for the Program for Infants and Toddlers Caregivers (PITC) by the Center for Child and Family Services and is a graduate of the Head Start-Johnson & Johnson Fellows Program.



**Beth E. Van Horn:** Co-chair, Health and Nutrition Action Committee

Beth is currently an Extension Educator at Penn State. She holds a doctorate from Penn State in Agricultural and Extension Education; and, undergraduate and graduate degrees in Home Economics Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. For 21 years, Beth has been an extension educator and has received several honors from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. Beth writes an award winning, weekly foods column for the *Centre Daily Times* and a monthly column for the supplement, *Family Pages*. She is a guest writer for *Lancaster Farming* and various other newsletters.



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## PNC PARTNERS WITH SMART START FOR UNITED WAY DAY OF CARING 2006

This fall, Smart Start-Centre County created a special program as part of the 2006 Centre County Day of Caring. Smart Start invited child care program directors to identify projects that would help improve their facilities according to the requirements of the keystone STARS program. Then Smart Start asked PNC Bank volunteers to take on these projects. This was a natural partnership since both Smart Start and PNC Bank, through its Grow Up Great program, are committed to improving the quality of early experiences for young children.

Beth Dougherty, Director, Our Lady of Victory Preschool summed it up: "We were so excited to have our school participate in the Day of Caring. The people (from PNC Bank) who volunteered were wonderful—they were enthusiastic and committed to helping us finish our projects." We really appreciated all of the help we received; we were able to accomplish things in one day that would have taken several months to try and coordinate the volunteers and resources on our own. More than anything though, we were grateful for the opportunity to be involved in an event that involved and helped members of the entire community. "



*PNC Bank branch managers and volunteer coordinators Dennie Fetzer and Chad Feather, with a larger team than we could photograph here, made the PNC Day of Caring a great success. Local PNC Bankers were joined by volunteers who drove from as far away as Harrisburg to help local child care programs improve their facilities. Photos provided by PNC Bank and OIV Preschool*

