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BIG IMPROVEMENTS FOR (VERY!) SMALL BUSINESS

Leaders from five preschools, child care centers complete business training program; community partnership offers free “mini MBA” to improve child care quality on Peninsula

NEWPORT NEWS, VA (May 10, 2016) – Wythe Presbyterian Preschool was struggling with enrollment and financial stability when its director, Cindy Brown, began taking courses in the Early Education Business Program. Over a year later, enrollment has more than doubled, income is up and Cindy has systematically improved every aspect of the school’s business operations.

That’s just one of the success stories celebrated May 10 at the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, when Brown cheered on the eight 2016 graduates of the Early Education Business Program. Hampton Vice Mayor Linda Curtis served as the keynote speaker and addressed the importance of early childhood education, along with initiatives happening on the Peninsula to support our youngest community members.

Referred to as a “mini MBA” for owners, administrators and educators, the Early Childhood Business Program helps preschools and child care centers achieve best business practices to improve their overall quality. It is sponsored by Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula, in partnership with the Small Business Development Center and the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. The program is funded by Hampton Human Services Quality Improvement Initiative.

“Child care providers are the backbone of the quality of life in our community,” said Bruce Myers, executive director for Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula. “When they can run their program like a successful business, it changes everything.”

The award-winning program is free for participants. Since it began in 2010, representatives from 152 early childhood small businesses across Hampton Roads have successfully completed the program. Participants receive one-on-one mentoring and coursework in:

- Strategic planning
- Leadership
- Business systems

- HR management
- Web marketing
- Budgeting and financial management

How do these business improvements translate into better-quality care for children? For example, the HR training helps administrators manage their employees more effectively; happier teachers tend to stay in their jobs, and there is a strong correlation between teacher turnover and child care quality. Children feel more secure and learn better when they have a strong relationship with their teacher/caregiver, which can only come when the teacher sticks around.

Also, to be able to purchase new classroom materials, replace aging playground equipment, take field trips, etc, a program needs steady income—which means keeping all spots filled. By improving business systems, there will be more satisfied parents keeping their children enrolled, and by improving marketing, the waiting list will stay full.

This year's graduates are:

1. Emmanuel Lutheran Preschool and Child Development Center
2. The Garden of Children
3. Bright Heights Learning Center
4. Victory School Wee Care Daycare
5. KiddyCity Daycare



Chamber President Mike Kuhns addresses graduates while Hampton Vice Mayor Linda Curtis looks on.



Bruce Myers and Lauren Small present a graduate with her certificate.



High-resolution photos available on request!

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With a vision that all Peninsula children will start school prepared and healthy, Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula is a nonprofit organization located in Newport News. It's a coalition of parents, businesses, civic leaders, nonprofits, school systems, early childhood professionals and private citizens. As public-private partnership, Smart Beginnings implements early childhood strategies in our region to enhance the quality of early childhood education and service programs for children under age 5. Key programs include Virginia Quality, a rating and improvement system for early childhood centers; the Universal Screen, which connects expectant mothers with free and low-cost resources to ensure a healthy pregnancy; BITSE, an behavioral intervention team that provides counsel at centers where a child is at risk of being expelled; and a free Resource and Referral Program that connects local families with child care and preschool options that fit their needs.