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Durham child care center hopes to open debt-free

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This is an artist's rendering of the Jim and Carolyn Hunt Child Care Resource Center in Durham. It will open in the next few months, but organizers would like to open and operate debt-free.

DURHAM -- Organizers of the new Jim and Carolyn Hunt Child Care Resource Center in Durham plan to officially open the building in the next few months, but they still are in need of donations.

The center will be home to several child care organizations -- both public and private -- and will serve Durham, Orange and Wake counties.

Supporters have raised about \$750,000, but they are hoping to get \$3.5 million total so the building can open and operate debt-free.

The center got a jump-start Tuesday when Capital Broadcasting CEO Jim Goodman announced that his company would contribute \$1 for every \$2 raised, up to a total of \$200,000.

"We're hoping organizations and people will respond to that challenge," said Sue Russell, president of the Child Care Services Association.

Located on Briggs Avenue near Durham Technical Community College and the Employment Security Commission building, the new state-of-the-art facility will be a one-stop resource center for child care needs, according to organizers.

The center will house Child Care Services Association's Child Care Resource and Referral and Technical Assistance divisions, Durham's Partnership for Children (Smart Start and More at Four) and Durham's Alliance for Child Care Access, which provides child care subsidies to low-income working families.

The center will be home to an expanded nutrition program with a new commercial grade kitchen that can produce more than 1 million meals a year for children in child care facilities in all three counties.

An infant/toddler classroom will be included.

"We will become a showcase for folks across the state and the nation," Russell said.

By owning and operating the facility, the center hopes to lower current occupancy costs for all three agencies.

The center estimates a savings over the next 20 years of \$2 million to \$5 million in rent and infrastructure costs, which then can be directed toward services for families and children.

Goodman, former Gov. Jim Hunt and N.C. Central University Chancellor James Ammons will serve as the honorary campaign chairmen.

Campaign cabinet co-chairs are MaryAnn Black, associate vice president for community affairs at Duke University Health Systems; Scott Gardner, district manager at Duke Power; and Ellen Reckhow, chairwoman of the Durham County Commissioners.

The center will be a publicly visible way to honor the Hunts' dedication to children, according to organizers. The center will embody the Hunts' values: "collaboration of resources, private-public partnerships and expansion of successful programs."

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Editorial

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A building for children

Durham and the region are fortunate to have friends like Jim and Carolyn Hunt and Jim Goodmon.

The former governor and his wife and Goodmon, the WRAL, Durham Bulls and American Tobacco owner, are major players in a new regional center for children that will open in the next few months on Briggs Avenue in Durham. Named the Jim and Carolyn Hunt Child Care Resource Center, the new building will be home to a variety of private and public child care agencies and will be a regional headquarters serving Orange, Wake and Durham counties.

Some of the agencies that will be housed there include:

- * The Child Care Services Association's referral and technical assistance divisions;
- * Durham's Partnership for Children, which includes Smart Start and More at Four; and
- * Durham's Alliance for Child Care Access, which provides child care subsidies.

It will also include a kitchen that can produce more than 1 million meals a year for children in child care facilities in all three counties.

Jim Hunt will always be remembered as the education governor, and his and Carolyn's commitment to children has not wavered since leaving office. This center will be a resource for children and families so that youngsters can be better prepared to enter school. It's well-documented that children who are ready to enter the first grade have a much better chance at succeeding in elementary school and beyond.

Of course, such a facility requires money. Some \$750,000 has been raised so far, but the goal is to raise \$3.5 million in order to open debt-free, which would be an enviable position.

That's where Goodmon came in. He pledged that his company, Capitol Broadcasting, would donate \$1 for every \$2 raised, up to a total of \$200,000. Goodmon, Hunt, and N.C. Central University Chancellor James Ammons are the honorary campaign chairs.

It was a generous gesture on Goodmon's part, and a reminder that the region has many businesses like Capitol Broadcasting that believe their corporate best interests are tied up in the community's best interests, and are willing to act on that belief.

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