

The Herald-Sun

CCSA celebrates 40 years, gets \$1 million grant

Oct. 25, 2013

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CHAPEL HILL —Celebrating 40 years, under new leadership and having just received a \$1 million grant to help one of its flagship programs, the Child Care Services Association is still an influential presence in the early childhood community.

Oct. 11 marked four decades since the merging of Durham Day Care Council and the Day Care Services Association in Orange County to better serve children through early childhood care and education.

“CCSA has helped over 100,000 children in the Triangle find quality child care that fits their parents’ needs to attend school or go to work,” said CCSA’s newest president Anna Carter. “CCSA has also significantly improved the success, quality and continuity of care for early child care teachers and program in North Carolina and other states.”

To mark the milestone, CCSA held a celebratory dinner on its anniversary in the Friday Center for Continuing Education. The event included an auction and keynote speaker, Joan Lombardi, the director of Early Opportunities and former deputy assistant secretary for policy and external affairs in Administration for Children and Families.

“It was a great opportunity to celebrate, reflect and have some fun,” Carter said.

Now serving as the part-time executive director of CCSA’s TEACH Early Childhood National Technical Assistant and Quality Assurance Center, Sue Russell had been the agency’s original president.

She’s attributes its success to its adaptability.

“We’re more strategic,” Russell said. “We have tended to be an innovator. We knew that nutrition was important before all the conversation about childhood obesity and the importance of workforce development.

“These kinds of innovations have positioned us well,” she continued. “We understand the needs and effect strategy to address those needs. We can turn on a dime if we see a need.”

According to a CCSA report, “The State of Child Care in the Triangle 2013,” there are close to 8,500 children under the age of three in need of child care and only 123 regulated child-care centers that provide infant and toddler care.

Showing that many are paying an average of \$1,200 per month for full-time infant care (birth to 2 years) equaling about 35 percent of a family’s annual income, the report also points out that the child-care centers where most infants and toddlers are enrolled have an average star-rating of 3.84 out of 5 in Durham.

Part of what CCSA has been doing since about 1990 is helping those who work in early childhood education gain more education that would benefit them professionally and personally, as well as their students.

A project of the Child Care Services Association, the TEACH Early Childhood scholarship was created to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover in the early childhood workforce.

The national program was recently awarded a \$1 million grant to expand to more states.

“This grant is so special because they understand that what we’re doing with our work,” Russell said. “It’s an important opportunity for child care and early childhood and improves opportunities for low-income women to better themselves.”

Nationally, 48 percent of TEACH recipients are women of color while in North Carolina, 62 percent are first generation college students.

“It’s all about success,” Carter explained. “The success of the individual teacher, the success of the program, it ultimately leads to the success of the child.”