



Downtown Hampton

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHILD CARE CENTER EARNS FIRST FOUR-STAR RATING IN HAMPTON

*Downtown Hampton Child Development Center among highest-rated
early childhood programs in Virginia under new state assessment*

HAMPTON, VA (October 26, 2010) – After nearly 40 years teaching children to reach for the stars, one local preschool has gotten stars of its own. Downtown Hampton Child Development Center has earned a coveted four-star rating from the Virginia Star Quality Initiative. This distinguishes the nonprofit preschool and child care center as the first four-star facility in Hampton and only the fourth on the Peninsula.

Downtown Hampton Child Development Center has a history of leading the area in quality child care; in 1988, it became the first center on the Peninsula to be nationally accredited, through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Upholding its mission to make quality child care affordable, Downtown Hampton Child Development Center offers the only sliding-scale tuition rate on the Peninsula.

Virginia established this new Quality Rating and Improvement System to define standards for early childhood education, rated on scale of one to five stars, so parents can make informed decisions when choosing a center for their child. The system creates both accountability and clear information that's easily available. Programs are evaluated for education, qualifications and training of staff; quality of staff-child interactions; class sizes and teacher-to-child ratios; and classroom environment.

“We are very pleased to have received four stars,” said Jaynelle Oehler, executive director of Downtown Hampton Child Development Center, “Our staff worked hard to ensure that we reached the highest level possible in all four performance standards.”

Programs that volunteer to participate in QRIS (the state has not yet made it mandatory) are assessed by trained and experienced Star Quality Raters, who conduct a thorough documentation review and on-site visits to determine which star level a facility will receive.

“In a four-star program, parents can expect a good quality of life for their children,” said Ivy Mitchell, co-chair of the Board of Directors for Preschool Partners of the Virginia Peninsula. “They will be cared for in a safe, comfortable place where their needs for social

interaction, mental stimulation, exercise, rest and nutrition will be met. The well-trained staff will understand the child's emotional needs and know how to partner with parents to guide the child's behavioral development."

To see the star ratings of centers in their area, parents can visit SmartBeginnings.org. The average rating across the state has been two or three stars.

"DHCDC is among the highest-rated programs in Virginia. There are no 5 star programs," Mitchell said. For anyone interesting in seeing DHCDC's program in action, there will be a community open house on Tuesday, Nov. 16, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at DHCDC's newest location, the Mary Peake Center at 1306 Thomas Street in Hampton. The event will include tours, refreshments and classroom visits.

Downtown Hampton Child Development Center is a nonprofit preschool whose mission is to nurture young children by providing affordable, quality preschool programs that develop the "whole child" and foster school readiness. Serving children ages 6 weeks to 5 years, DHCDC's nationally accredited program (NAEYC) and degreed teachers put it in the top 7% of child care in the country. DHCDC offers the Peninsula's only sliding-scale tuition rate, based on family income, with a focus on children from "at risk" and underserved populations, including children with special needs. The organization began educating and caring for children in 1971, with support from downtown Hampton churches and the City of Hampton, and has grown to serve more than 200 children at two locations. As a 501(c)(3) organization, DHCDC still depends on strong support from the community. For more information, please visit www.dhcdc.org.