



CHILD CARE

Spring 2007

News

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President's Message by Shannon Erickson, SCCCA President

Did you know that an ant can lift more than 50 times its weight? According to National Geographic magazine, they can and do carry enormous loads many times a day. When you also consider that they live in colonies of hundreds of worker ants all taking on a common goal, well, the outcomes are surely staggering.

That's how I see us, the members of the South Carolina Child Care Association. We are a colony of like-minded, worker ants. We are incredibly able and all working toward a common goal; the survival of private enterprise in the early education and child care industry. We are working for the best environment for young children and their families. We are working for the dedicated teachers and caregivers we employ. We are working for our communities that need the services we provide, taxes we pay, and intrinsic value our businesses bring.

It's also the way I feel in Columbia, attending meetings with what I sometimes perceive as larger powers. It is in those instances that I truly consider the ant. This year during the Legislative session, the 4K pilot program is being considered for all districts in our state. I, on behalf of the SCCCA, have been at the table throughout the process, praising the good, sharing our needs, and stating our concerns and worries. I have worked to educate all involved in what our Association feels is needed for this program to succeed and not harm us in the process. What we have is not all bad, but it is not all good. We have made great strides, but still have more to do. I see myself much like that ant lifting something 50 times larger than me, but I also see the progress being made.

Currently, the SC House of Representatives has sent the 4K bill off to get a financial

impact study. This is a direct result of sharing data on the projected cost (\$190 million) of this undertaking with some of the General Assembly members. The SCCCA, as early childhood specialists, does not dispute the value of early educational experiences, however, we stress that there is a responsibility to the taxpayers when using their funds. In the 4K pilot program interim report from last month, the Education Oversight Committee stated that no increase in this program was warranted until further data was collected. In data released by DSS just this week, only 6 out of 70 public schools participating in the 4K pilot are fully licensed (one of the program requirements) and 15 are not licensed at all. One hundred percent of the private, First Steps over-seen programs are fully licensed. These details will be part of the discussion when this program is debated on the floor of the House.

I believe that the SCCCA is making a difference. The commitment you all make every day when you open your doors to the children of South Carolina keeps me determined. Yes, we are a colony of ants ... able to see a formidable task and take it on, one piece at a time. I am proud of what we do for our state and its youngest citizens, and I thank all of you for your part in it.



Legislative Update

Spring 2007

Jeffrey N. Thordahl and Hope Lanier

The sky is not falling in South Carolina. But...it would be safe to bet that Chicken Little is moving into Gamecock country. In fact, we are pretty sure "Chicken" Little has been building a nest not far from the South Carolina State House since the 2006 Legislative session began in January. Following summer and fall months of seemingly non-stop activity on the Child Care front during the "off session," the General Assembly has come back to town and picked up the pace even more, taking up a multitude of legislative proposals with serious potential consequences for child care center owners, providers and parents alike. In other words, the sky has not fallen – yet – but then the General Assembly does not adjourn until June.

The most significant legislative issue facing private child care providers so far this year is a proposal that would expand the current 4-K pilot program for at-risk students in the so-called "Corridor of Shame" to school districts statewide starting in the 2008-09 school year. Thanks to the hard work of SCCCA leaders over the past couple of years, the Association was welcome at the negotiating table where they represented you well when House Education Committee Chairman Bob Walker (R-Spartanburg) introduced H 3175, the 4-K Expansion legislation. The SCCCA has been very successful in reaching several critical compromises and victories, including an increase in the state reimbursement for each child and for associated transportation costs, tightening the legislative definition of "at risk" to make sure it is both financially based and verifiable, and providing for grants to help prepare and equip new classrooms and stock existing ones with consumable supplies each year.

This success is truly great news, *but* it would be a crime for these victories to make SCCCA members too comfortable with the legislative landscape and lose sight of the real challenge on the horizon. Several in our State, including the many in the Legislature and those in and around the office of the State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Rex, have their sights set very clearly on a free, universal 4-K program in public schools all across South Carolina. We do not want to play "Chicken Little" here, either, but any questions as to the validity of that plan (and our concerns) were answered in Dr. Rex's Transition Team report which specifically lists the roll out of both public state wide Universal 4-K and a new public 3-K program for at-risk kids within the next five years.

Private Child Care providers all across South Carolina felt the pinch of losing 5 year old students, and most have said they simply will not be able to keep their doors open and make high quality, affordable programs available without 4 year olds. Now, more than ever, it is absolutely

critical that all SCCCA members reach out to their State Representatives and Senators, invite them to visit area child care centers, and

make sure they understand in "real life" terms the truly valuable role the child care industry plays in South Carolina. *The only way to stop the moving "train" before South Carolina implements a universal public 4K program is to be sure that YOUR legislators truly understand the value of private child care and the service your centers provide for children, parents, employers and as tax paying businesses in every corner of our state.*

What's Next?

The House Education Committee has passed H 3175 (The 4-K Bill) and the entire House of Representatives will debate it in late March. Several members of the Senate are considering similar legislation and are likely to begin work on a separate bill in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, the State Budget will almost certainly include the funding needed to continue the current 4-K pilot program for another school year.

What can you do to help?

If you are interested in taking those critical steps to save the child care industry in South Carolina, give your SCCCA Board Members or Lobbyists a call. We can help introduce you to your State Representative, arrange for him to visit your child care center, help you craft a letter to your local paper or an email message to your State Senator. We can also point you to the most recent economic impact data, the latest activity on 4K Legislation and give you an idea how your elected officials have voted on child care legislation in the past.

Your fellow SCCCA members have started doing their part and our success so far is proof positive that those efforts work. The real battle – the one that will determine the future of the Child Care industry in our state – is the one that lies ahead. Do your part, be proud of your center, share your success stories with the people who will vote to support your future and make sure your parents, teachers, vendors, neighbors and friends know what's at stake, too. It's up to all the members of the SCCCA to make sure Chicken Little "clucks" right on out of Columbia and leaves us to care for and prepare South Carolina's youngest children for success in the many years to come!





Contacting your Elected Representatives

Have an issue of importance to you or your business?
Want to urge your Representative to support a key amendment?
Contact your Senator or Representative and let them know!



Here are a few tips to make sure your message is well received:

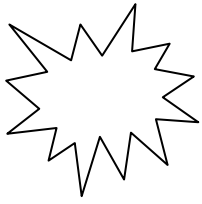
- **Be Concise** – Legislators literally get hundreds of calls and letters on many different issues. To ensure that your letter is read and your opinion heard, keep it short and simple.
- **Be Clear** – State your opinion early in the letter or conversation and be clear about your position (For example: “I support House Bill 1492” or “We oppose an increase in corporate income taxes.”)
- **Identify Yourself** – Legislators often depend on the opinions of their constituents when making key voting decisions. Your input is welcome, even if your opinions differ.
- **Be Polite** – No two people agree on every issue, but the vast majority of our elected officials are working very hard to do what they believe are the right things. While it is perfectly appropriate to disagree and express concern or frustration, it is also important not to be disagreeable. Be careful not to burn bridges by using rude, cynical, threatening or inappropriate language. Who knows, you may need their help again in the future! If you agree or disagree strongly, be sure to register your opinion at the voting booth.
- **Be Truthful** – There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to your elected officials. If your Representative has a question that you cannot answer, acknowledge it, avoid speculation, offer to get the facts and get back to the lawmaker.

Follow through is key!

- **Be Specific** – In a typical state legislative session, it is not unusual for 2500 bills or more to be introduced, so it is important to be specific when you communicate with your Legislators about an issue that matters to you.
- **Good things to include are:**
 - Bill Numbers (example: H1492)
 - Bill Sponsors (example: Sponsored by Senator Jones of Charleston)
 - Recent Action (example: which was recently adopted by a 12-7 vote by the House Education Committee)
 - Like Action (example: which is scheduled for consideration on the Senate Floor next week)
- **Be Relevant** – Whenever possible, it is helpful to frame an important issue by providing your legislators with local stories or basic facts from their district. By personalizing your support or concern using real-life examples, the issues often become more relevant, timely and more easily understood.
- **Provide a return mailing address and phone number, even if you are sending an email** – Most legislative offices will gladly accept email or fax correspondence, but many prefer to respond to your issue by US Mail. Make sure you provide them the information necessary to respond to your concern.
- **Say “Thank you.”** – It’s just the right thing to do.

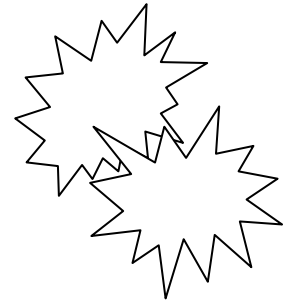
...And a few “don’ts” to keep in mind

- Don’t apologize for contacting your legislator
- Don’t tell a legislator or staff member how important you are
- Don’t overstate your case
- Don’t be confrontational
- Don’t use your election vote as a threat or enticement



Save the Date...

Legislative Day
Wednesday, May 2, 2007
12:00 Noon – 2:00 p.m.
Blatt Building, Room 221



House Education Committee Dinner a Rousing Success!

“Grazie” to members of the SCCCA Board who hosted the SC House Education Committee with a wonderful Italian dinner at historic Villa Tronco in Columbia on January 23rd. With a crowd of more than 40, we had an excellent turn out, a delicious meal and most importantly, a wonderful opportunity to educate our legislators about the private Child Care industry in South Carolina. Everyone had a great time and we hope this will be the first in a long tradition of celebration and conversation with these important elected officials.



A Note of interest...

In the wee hours of the night on February 6th or the morning of February 7th, the Gaston Childcare Center was burglarized by one or more thieves of superior technical abilities.

The GCC facility is protected (or we thought we were!) by 24-hour surveillance cameras and battery back-up fire and alarm systems. The burglar knew how to disarm the electrical power at the external electrical power service entrance AND the external phone service (to disable the internet and alarm). Then they disabled the external camera, jimmied the back door to one of the classrooms, entered the building and dismantled the security alarm, emergency lighting and fire alarm system. At this point, it was like taking candy from a baby! They stole laptops, DVD/CD players (did not take any TVs because TVs would be too heavy to get across the fence), a strong box, even first aid kits, groceries, cash and checks. (We are thankful we only had Tuesday's receipts on hand.)

They were also knowledgeable concerning the surveillance system. They located the server and stole it too, insuring the fact that pictures could not be accessed!

So, a word of warning to our readers... if you think you are secure, it may be a good idea to scrutinize your systems again!

Although we are in the process of re-establishing the surveillance systems and the security and fire alarms, we are going to the additional expense of installing a sensor that will detect any movement in the area. This sensor will be difficult to disable, because the system is hidden and can only be accessed with a great deal of effort. If our illustrious burglar comes back now, there will be enough noise with horns buzzing and whistles going off to awaken not only the Chief of Police but the rest of the Town of Gaston as well!

Also, Dell computers have a theft detection program that, when activated, will track the footprint of a specified computer when it goes online. Needless to say, we are anxiously awaiting a call from Dell sometime in the near future (we hope), telling us where our systems are located! Won't it be fun to see which flea market they come from?

-Jerry Cook

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South Carolina Preschool Teacher Publishes Book of Inspirational Poetry

Cheryl Rivers has been a preschool teacher with La Petite Academy in Summerville, South Carolina for the past 5 years. Not only is Cheryl a talented, enthusiastic teacher who is devoted to teaching children; she is now a published author of inspirational poetry.

THE MOST AMAZING TWISTS AND TURNS OF LIFE

June 13, 2006 was indeed a special day for me. This was the day Dorrance Publishing Company, Inc., of Pittsburgh, PA completed the publication of my first book, *Words from My Heart: A Collection of Inspirational Poems*.

Writing has always been a passion of mine. It's been with me since childhood. Between 1997 and 2000, some of my biographical pieces were read in public. Approximately one year later, a very dear friend of mine (who is a playwright and a former La Petite Associate) and I began a performing arts ministry within our church. In this ministry plays and musicals, as well as original songs were produced and performed. During this time, I began to write an abundance of poems. It was a three-year process. Once the poems were completed, people encouraged me to get them published. Time went by, and I finally decided to step out [on faith] and do what I was encouraged to do. Having some of my work read in public is one thing, but I never thought I would be blessed with the opportunity to have my work put in print by a nationally known publishing company. Life has some of the most amazing twists and turns!

The poems in *Words from My Heart* are inspirational, and it may be said this book is just for Christians. If you are content in your relationship with God, then

this book is for you. If you desire to have a closer walk with the Savior, this book is for you. Or, if you enjoy inspirational poetry, then *Words from My Heart* is definitely for you. Here is an excerpt from one of the poems.

The Sunshine of His Love

*Father, how do I know that
You smile on me?*

*When the sun is shining brightly,
Or when I'm in Your presence so serene?*

I have received a great deal of positive feedback since the release of *Words from My Heart*. I have had the opportunity to promote the book at a Women's Luncheon and at my first book signing with Trinity Christian Bookworld in my hometown, Moncks Corner.

The book can be purchased online at www.dorrancebookstore.com and www.amazon.com or by calling Dorrance Publishing Company at 1-800-788-7654 for \$8.00. The ISBN number is: 13:978-0-8059-6823-1.

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact me at cherylpr94@hotmail.com.



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would not have been possible.



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Question of the Quarter...

My school uses wood mulch for playground cushioning, but the dirt sifts through and the children get really dirty. Can anyone suggest another product and supplier to meet the cushioning requirements of DSS and mine for cleanliness?

Please email kboyce@mgclaw.com with your answers. They will appear in the Summer 2007 Child Care News. Also, if you have a question for other SCCCA members, please respond to the same email address. It's time to share our ideas.



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