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NEWS RELEASE

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Durham Early Head Start Centers Partner with NC State's Natural Learning Initiative to Renovate Playgrounds

*Local Child Care Center Hosts Ribbon Cutting and Fall Festival to Showcase
Renovated Outdoor Learning Environment for Infants and Toddlers*

Durham, NC – Early Start Academy, a high-quality child care center in Durham, is hosting a playground ribbon cutting and fall festival on **Saturday, November 5, 2011** to showcase the center's new outdoor learning environment. The playground renovations are part of NC State's Natural Learning Initiative in participation with the Durham Early Head Start (EHS) Program. Festival activities will include pony rides, a moon bounce, Zumba, face painting, prizes and food.

Durham EHS is a free, comprehensive child development and family support program for low-income families with children aged birth to three years old and to pregnant women. It is a collaboration between Durham's Partnership for Children, Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project and Healthy Families Durham.

The newly renovated outdoor learning environment at Early Start Academy is one of four planned projects in Durham this fall. The purpose of the Natural Learning Initiative is to promote the importance of the natural environment in the daily experience of all children, primarily through environmental design.

What: Playground Ribbon Cutting and Fall Festival, Early Start Academy

A collaborative project of Durham Early Head Start and NC State's Natural Learning Initiative, Early Start Academy's new outdoor learning environment, which is designed specifically for infants and toddlers, will serve as a model playground for enhanced outdoor play and learning. The outdoor play space can ignite a child's learning and imagination in a way that is difficult to replicate in the classroom. Benefits include obesity prevention, learning from sensory experiences, enhanced school readiness and physical development.

When: Saturday, November 5, 2011 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Where: Early Start Academy, 702 Trent Drive, Durham, NC 27705

To learn more about NC State's Natural Learning Initiative, visit www.naturalearning.org.

To learn more about Durham Early Head Start, visit www.dpfc.net/EarlyHeadStart.aspx.

About Durham's Partnership for Children - Making young children a priority.

Founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County, the Partnership works as an independent, local nonprofit that serves young children birth to age 5 and their families to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. For more than 16 years, the Partnership helps working parents pay for child care, improves the quality of child care and provides health and family support services to thousands of Durham County families with young children. The Partnership leverages the public and private sectors to achieve its mission: *To mobilize and unify the Durham community to create and support innovative and successful approaches to serving the needs of children birth to age 5 and their families.* The Partnership administers Smart Start, NCPRE-K, and Early Head Start in Durham County. For more information about the Partnership, visit www.dpfc.net or call 919-403-6960, ext. 221.