

Training sessions focus on birth to 5

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Story by **DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN**

DURHAM - The Early Childhood Faith Initiative launched a year ago is continuing to get the word out about how congregations can reach its littlest parishioners -- birth to age five. The effort is a collaboration between Durham's Partnership for Children and End Poverty Durham.

Initiative coordinator Winnie Morgan sends out monthly newsletters to congregations sharing ways to integrate birth-to-5 programming. Also, three lunch and learn training sessions will be held Feb. 22, March 22 and May 10 addressing different topics in early childhood.

First up is Kate Gallagher, director of the Frank Porter Graham Family and Child Care Program, who will speak on "Early Development: Brain, Language & Social-Emotional."

Congregational staff whose work focuses on youngsters, volunteers interested in helping their church and clergy are all welcome to attend the free sessions -- all held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Soul Café of Duke Memorial United Methodist Church downtown.

On March 22, Cindy Riley, a parent educator with the local Welcome Baby program, will talk about "Turning No Into yes: Positive Communications with Young Challenging Children."

On May 10, Anna Berkeley with Durham Inclusion Support Services will speak on "Welcoming Autistic Children to Faith Classrooms."

The overall goal of the Early Childhood Faith Initiative is "for faith educators and children/family ministers to increase their understanding and knowledge of working with birth to five and to reach out to the underserved birth-to-5 population."

Morgan said they would really like to see churches reach out into the community, especially with 23 percent of children born into poverty in Durham. They can do that by offering support groups to parents in their congregation or the community. At Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, a play group for Latino children is also a time to talk about parenting.

Morgan said that while some congregations have faith educators, other smaller churches might have a more difficult time addressing the youngest age group. She hopes that the initiative will inspire people to recruit volunteers to work with the age group.

The initiative is seeking \$25,000 to match a grant from an anonymous donor that ends in June.

"If we get the congregations involved, we can make that difference in Durham County with our own birth to five," Morgan said. She is a new grandmother and sees how fast babies develop cognitively. She loves her job, she said.

Morgan also noted that families often look for a congregational home when they have young children, and programming for young families is a way to grow membership.

For information, contact the Durham Partnership for Children at (919) 403-6960 or visit www.dpfc.net/EarlyChildhoodFaithInitiative.aspx or www.endpovertydurham.org.

To RSVP to any of the congregations and early childhood training sessions, contact Morgan at (919) 732-1524 or winniemorgan@juno.com.

Congregations and Early Childhood Training lunch and learn sessions

All sessions are held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, 504 W. Chapel Hill St., Durham, in the Soul Café. Enter at the back of the building. Bring your own lunch, drinks provided.

Feb. 22: "Early Development: Brain, Language & Social-Emotional"

March 22: "Turning No into a Yes: Positive Communications with Young Challenging Children"

May 10: "Welcoming Autistic Children to Faith Classrooms"