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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**      CONTACT: Jeremy Evans, Community Dev Coordinator  
DATE: April 4, 2006              PHONE: 919-403-6960, ext 224; jeremy@dpfc.net

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**Durham's Partnership for Children Presents  
Champion for Children Awards at Community Forum**

Durham, NC - **Durham's Partnership for Children**, a Smart Start Initiative supporting the needs of young children and their families, presented Champion for Children Awards at a Community Forum on April 4th. The Awards were presented to members of the Durham community who continue to make a substantial contribution to young children and families in our County.

"The Champion for Children Award is a way for the Partnership to recognize the outstanding commitment of Durham's advocates for children and families. This work impacts school readiness, and the health and success of all of Durham County children. We are very pleased to honor these important efforts," stated Bill Bryant, Chair of the Community Awareness and Development Committee.

The awards were presented at a community forum co-hosted by the **Partnership and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce** entitled "Investing in our Children, Families and Workforce" which took place at the Durham Marriott at the Civic Center. The Forum's goal was to promote the connection between businesses, families and child care with a keynote speaker and a panel of local leaders providing strategies for implementing "best-practices" in creating family-friendly work environments. The Champions for Children winners embody this commitment to families in Durham County through their tireless efforts.

The first Champions for Children winner was Jane Johnson-Chavis, Deputy Director of the Arc of Durham County and Project Director for the Family Support Subsidy project. With only a small staff and limited funds, Jane has worked tirelessly for years at the Arc of Durham to help children with special-needs receive the services and assistance they require. Each case receives her individual, generous attention, and grateful letters from children and families offer testimony to this commitment. Recently her commitment has included making sure that the Arc provides services in Spanish to Hispanic families.

The second Champion for Children Award went to David Covington of Duke Children's Primary Care. David strives to be an advocate for the children and families he meets at Duke Primary Care. He takes time to listen to these families' struggles and works to connect them to valuable resources in the community. David also provides assistance to the medical staff, giving them guidance about how and where to make referrals in the community. He also serves as the chairperson of the Durham Local Interagency Council, a group of parents and community providers that meets monthly to deal with issues related to children 0-5, especially those with special needs.

The third Champions for Children award was presented to Ilene Britt, Director of the Early Childhood Program at Durham Technical Community College. A long-time member of the Durham's Partnership for Children Board, Britt has been involved as a collaborative partner in a new capacity-building grant called Learner Link. Learner Link fills a growing need in the child care industry for flexible, online education for early childhood teachers. The program works to improve their teacher education levels and to build the County's capacity to sustain the ongoing provision of online learning as a professional development strategy. Ilene Britt and Durham Technical

Community College worked closely with Durham's Partnership for Children, Child Care Services Association and FPG Child Development Institute to implement two online, hybrid courses in the Early Childhood department at Durham Tech.

All winners received a plaque and words of gratitude from Harold G. Sellars, Board Chair of Durham's Partnership for Children (pictured), Marsha Basloe, Executive Director at the Durham's Partnership for Children and Cindy Ray Keene, Public Affairs Manager at Time Warner Cable, a sponsor of the event.

### **About Durham's Partnership for Children**

*Durham's Partnership for Children was founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County. Smart Start is North Carolina's nationally recognized initiative to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start helps working parents pay for childcare, improves the quality of childcare and provides health and family support services in every North Carolina County. The Partnership works with funded partners (affiliated organizations) 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 0-5 and their families." Durham's Partnership for Children also administers the Governor's More at Four Program in Durham County.*

*For more information about Durham's Partnership for Children, visit [www.dpfc.net](http://www.dpfc.net) or contact Jeremy Evans at 919-403-6960, ext. 224.*