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First Steps “Counts Down” to Kindergarten

Hartsville, S.C.— Children are out of school for the summer but learning is still a priority for Darlington County First Steps (DCFS). Parents as Teachers, Parents Are First, and Countdown to Kindergarten are programs that continue service throughout high temperatures, encouraging school transitioning, family strengthening, and parent education.

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a First Steps program based on other successful school transition models from around the country. In its 10 years of operating through DCFS, the goals have been to increase the successful transition of South Carolina's most at-risk children into the K-12 school system; to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success; and to increase public awareness of the importance of school readiness.

This year, CTK began June 1, 2016 and continues through July. Eight Darlington County kindergarten teachers are assigned to 48 children for the summer. Children have six lessons in total- five lessons are conducted in the home and the last one is a visit to the school where the child will attend class in the fall. Children will be placed in the same classroom as the teacher who they were assigned to for the summer.

Math, literacy, and social studies are subjects introduced to children and parents receive education on healthy home habits to prepare the child's transition to a school schedule.

“Helping children be better prepared for kindergarten and helping parents understand what to expect is our aim” said Patricia Bailey, CTK Coordinator. “It is amazing seeing how this jumpstart in the summer makes a huge difference in the classroom.”

Kiwanis of Hartsville and United Way of Hartsville provide needed material support for the CTK program. “We thank the Elementary School Principals of Lamar, Pate, St. John, Southside, Rosenwald, and Cain for working with DCFS to ensure their pre-kindergarten students participate in CTK” stated DCFS Executive Director, Darnell McPherson.

DCFS' mission is to provide the information, support, and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life. For more information on programs offered by DCFS, call 843-857-3148 or visit their website at www.darlingtoncountyfirststeps.org.

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