



# Smart START of Buncombe County

## Success Starts at Birth

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*Nonprofit organizations throughout Asheville and the surrounding area nourish the people within our communities, caring for those in need, protecting our historic heritage, educating young and old, and nurturing our cultural soul. Each month, The Laurel is bringing to our readers some of the stories behind these agencies. This month, the “spotlight” is on Smart Start of Buncombe County.*

Our brains are hard wired and, according to brain mapping scientists, much of that wiring occurs in the first five years of life. Prekindergarten children are not just playing with toys, they are also learning how to participate in unfamiliar activities, detecting environmental cues, and dealing with a variety of situations in a constructive and ethical manner. All of these are crucial for developing the social and emotional skills that will serve them later in life.

Since, kids—and their 700 new neural connections per second—don’t come with instruction booklets, parents often turn to experts for sound advice. Smart Start of Buncombe County is one of those resources, dedicated to providing quality opportunities for early childhood education and development.

“The first 2000 days of a child’s life are crucial,” says Amy Darry, executive director of Smart Start. “By investing in a good foundation during the early years, we see a direct impact on long-term graduation and crime rates, income levels, physical health, and emotional fluency.” Recognizing that parenting choices are as diverse as children themselves, Smart Start offers several programs aimed at early childhood education and development.

About 40% of Smart Start’s resources go to the Child