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**North Carolina Governor Proclaims April as the Month of the Young Child**

*Raleigh, North Carolina –*  North Carolina’s future prosperity depends on a shared commitment to quality in the early care and education of its youngest citizens. In recognition, Governor Pat McCrory has proclaimed April as the Month of the Young Child and April 12-18 as the Week of the Young Child.

Throughout the month of April, communities across the state are celebrating young children, families and the professionals who care for and educate them. The Month of the Young Child helps focus public attention on the importance of ensuring that young children are provided with responsive relationships and developmentally appropriate experiences. Many featured events will occur April 12-18 during the Week of the Young Child™. These events highlight the needs of young children and their families and recognize the early childhood professionals, programs and services that meet those needs.

Young children experience tremendous brain growth in the early years of life. Much like the importance of a solid foundation in architecture, young children’s brains are forming important neurological connections that support their success in school and in life. These brain connections are formed in a “serve and return” fashion like a game of tennis, describes NCaeyc Executive Director Lorie Barnes. Babies and young children instinctively seek engagement from the important adults in their lives. Each glance, coo and babble is an opportunity for grown-ups to interpret and respond to children’s cues for stimuli and information. Warm, responsive relationships enriched with language help ensure children’s healthy development. Safe, secure relationships and environments help prevent the greatest risk to children’s well-being: toxic stress. Prolonged periods of toxic stress cause harmful chemicals to be released in children’s brains, resulting in long-term negative consequences. NCaeyc works to promote effective policies and practices that ensure all of North Carolina’s children receive high quality early care and education.

The Week of the Young Child™ is an annual celebration established in 1971 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world's largest early childhood education association, with nearly 80,000 members and a network of over 300 local, state and regional affiliates.

As the state affiliate for NAEYC, NCaeyc is the oldest and largest membership association in North Carolina for professionals who work with and on behalf of young children from birth through age eight. Last year, NCaeyc celebrated its 60th anniversary. With over 2000 members, NCaeyc works to promote and inspire excellence in early care and education in three ways: they educate, advocate and motivate.

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