

Agency focuses on moms and kids

BY LYNNE BRANDON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Final part in a series on "Advancing the Common Good through Transformed Lives: United Way of Greater Greensboro." This week: Guilford Child Development.

Nearly half of all households in Guilford County headed by single mothers with children under age five live in poverty. Without early intervention, these children



George McCain Jr.

are likely headed toward a lifetime of poverty and other major life challenges such as teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse, to name a few. At Guilford Child Development, the goal is to help these families and children reach their full potential in the early formative years.

Help is viewed as a hand up, not a hand out.

Studies show that a child who starts school behind will stay behind. With

that in mind, GCD programs are geared toward families in need and prepare children to enter school on the same playing field as other children. "We want to bring awareness to the importance of quality early childhood education," explains Trish Owens, director of organizational development. "Also, that less than 5 percent of total public education dollars go to preschool."

Owens says her organization is unique in offering five supportive programs under one umbrella. The programs include Regional Child Care Resources and Referral, Head Start and Early Head Start, Nurse-Family Partnership, Learning Together family literacy and Catering for Kids. "RCCR&R is a well kept secret that many parents don't know about," says Joyce Fairley, director of RCCR&R, about the United Way-funded program. "This program has helped thousands of parents not only find quality child care, but to pay for it."

The program is an excellent resource for parents, said Tina Akers Brown, chairwoman of United Way of Greater Greensboro's Growing Successful Kids focus area, which funds RCCR&R. "These families are not eligible for DSS child care



Tonya McCain with her daughter, Teona.

assistance and need help so they can continue working while their children receive the benefit of quality child care."

Single mother Tonya McCain had an additional reason for needing child care for her 3-year-old son.

She received a diagnosis of stage 3 breast cancer in October 2007 and was not given a promise for recovery. The 35-year-old mother had two children.

McCain subsequently lost her job and

dropped out of college. Cancer would not take a backseat, and she needed treatment immediately to survive. A rapid succession followed of chemo, double mastectomy, lymph node removal, radiation and now therapy as her body begins the long recovery process.

Like most cancer patients, McCain lost her hair, but not her sunny disposition. "I was so sick from my treatments that I could not hold my son," McCain said. "I desperately needed help with child care so my son could continue to learn and grow while I was dealing with cancer." GCD stepped in with a scholarship so her son could attend day care.

Today McCain is in remission and exudes a positive attitude and strong spirit.

"God delivered me by sending many angels to help, including GCD. I could not have made it without their assistance," McCain said, smiling. "They allowed my son to be a little boy."

As of Nov. 25, United Way of Greater Greensboro had raised 65 percent of its \$13 million goal (\$8.4 million). For information about United Way supported programs or how to contribute, go to www.unitedwaygo.org.

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