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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 29, 2015

**Durham's Partnership for Children partners with Barnes & Noble – Southpoint to collect books for children across Durham County**

**Durham, NC – Durham's Partnership for Children (the Partnership),** a *Smart Start Initiative*, announces the launch of its 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Barnes & Noble Holiday Book Drive on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>. Customers at the Barnes & Noble at Southpoint will have the opportunity to purchase books to benefit young children across Durham County who are in need of reading materials. The Holiday Book Drive lasts through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Last year, nearly 2,700 new books for children were purchased by generous patrons at Barnes & Noble's Southpoint location. All donated books are distributed by the Partnership to agencies throughout Durham that help young children. Books collected last year were shared with nearly 20 community agencies serving children in home visiting programs, social services, medical facilities, and a broad range of family support and family literacy programs. The Partnership works hard to ensure that these generously donated books are given to children who are least likely to have books of their own.

"The annual Holiday Book Drive has been an honored tradition for the past 10 years," said Cheri Hodges, Community Business Development Manager at the Barnes & Noble Southpoint location. "Our booksellers and customers often purchase and donate a personal childhood favorite as a way to pass on the joy of reading to a local child in need. Our goal this year is to collect 3,000 or more books to make a big impact in the lives of children in Durham."

The Partnership aims to collect books for children birth to age five, although the organization will accept books for children of all ages. Some of the greatest needs are bilingual books and board books for infants and toddlers.

Ensuring that children are ready to enter school is central to the Partnership's mission, and the book drive offers a chance to connect with the larger Durham community and build awareness of the extensive need for books. Early literacy is a crucial part of a child's development, as it enhances vocabulary, builds important communication skills, and gives them the tools they need to be successful in school and in life.

**About Durham's Partnership for Children - Making young children a priority.**

Founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County, the Partnership works as an independent, local nonprofit that serves young children birth to age 5 and their families to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. For 20 years, the Partnership has helped parents pay for child care, improved the quality of child care and provided health and family support services to thousands of Durham County families with young children. The Partnership leverages the public and private sectors to achieve its mission: *To ensure every child in Durham enters school ready to succeed, we lead community strategies for children birth to 5 and their families that promote healthy development and learning and enhance access to high quality care.* The Partnership administers Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Early Head Start in Durham County. For more information about the Partnership, visit [www.dpfc.net](http://www.dpfc.net) or call 919-403-6960, ext. 221.

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