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**Durham's Partnership for Children partners with Barnes & Noble – Southpoint to collect more than 3,000 books for children across Durham County**

**Durham, NC – Durham's Partnership for Children (the Partnership), a Smart Start Initiative,** announces that generous customers at Barnes & Noble - Southpoint purchased 3,061 new books for young children in Durham County during the Barnes & Noble Holiday Book Drive that ran from November 1 through December 31, 2016. This was the eleventh year that the Partnership has teamed up with Barnes & Noble to collect books for young children who might not otherwise have access to reading materials.

“For more than a decade, Barnes & Noble customers and employees have embraced our annual Holiday Book Drive benefiting Durham's Partnership for Children. On behalf of Barnes & Noble-Southpoint, I want to thank our customers and booksellers who have once again reflected the spirit of generosity. Thanks to their efforts and kindness, more than 3,000 children in Durham County received the gift of a new book” said Cheri Hodges, Community Business Development Manager.

In addition to individual donors, local publication *Carolina Parent* also contributed several hundred new books for the second year in a row, adding to the total impact of this project and strengthening ties between businesses and the community.

The Partnership works collaboratively with community agencies and nonprofits in order to give these generously donated books as soon as possible to the children and families who are least likely to have books of their own. During the eight week book drive, the Partnership sorted, packed and distributed the books to 20 community agencies serving children in home visiting programs, social services, and a variety of family support and family literacy programs. Additionally, each family applying this season for 2017-18 school year programs that serve 4-year-olds will receive a book from the drive.

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 – Preparing our children to succeed.**

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 more than 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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