

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR RELEASE: October 25, 2010**

### **Department of Human Services Celebrates Quality Initiative for Early Childhood Education**

*Better Beginnings, Arkansas' New Quality Child Care Program, Hosts Event to Raise Bar on  
Child Care Programs and Services*

**OCTOBER 25, 2010; Little Rock, Ark.** — Today the **Arkansas Department of Human Services** (DHS) celebrated the **Better Beginnings** program at Philander Smith College in Little Rock. **Better Beginnings**, a new quality rating and improvement system for all licensed child care providers in Arkansas, hosted a series of events to introduce the program to a variety of stakeholders across Arkansas.

The program was established as a resource for both parents and providers in the state. For child care providers, Better Beginnings supplies tools that encourage improvement to the quality of child care. For parents, the program provides resources that help with selection of quality child care around the state.

“As more Arkansans become aware of the impact of how important early childhood education is, they will need some help deciding which child care facility is best suited for their family’s needs,” said Tonya Russell, director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. “This is where Better Beginnings can help,” said Russell.

Recent studies have shown that children start learning before they are born. BornLearning.com states that, “Children are constantly learning, right from birth. Their early years are the foundation for growth and development, and what they learn during those years depends on the experiences they have each and every day.”

For more information on Better Beginnings, visit [www.arbetterbeginnings.com](http://www.arbetterbeginnings.com) or call 501-682-5890 or 1-800-445-3316.

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Attendees of the events had the privilege to hear guest speaker Joshua D. Sparrow M.D. of Harvard Medical School speak. Dr. Sparrow is an author, columnist and expert in the implementation and evaluation of community-based child development. Dr. Sparrow has also been a contributor to various national media such as, NPR, CNN, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the Today Show among many more.

The event also included local speakers on the agenda including: Laura Bednar, Ed.D., assistant commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education Learning Services; Max Dyson, superintendent of Hamburg School District; Rich Huddleston, executive director Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; Steve Jones, Deputy director, Arkansas Department of Human Services; Walter Kimbrough, Ph.D, president of Philander Smith College; Chad Rodgers, M.D. Arkansas Early Childhood Commission and Fellow and Chapter President of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Tonya Russell, director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education with the Arkansas Department of Human Service; John Selig, director, Department of Human Services; PJ Yarbrough, Curriculum Specialist Arkansas State University Childhood Services.

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