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CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES CHILD WELLBEING PROJECT WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR INNOVATION

The Child Wellbeing Project of Catawba County Social Services has received the prestigious Outstanding Achievement in Local Government Innovations Award from the Alliance for Innovation. The local program was developed in collaboration with The Duke Endowment, which hopes it will serve as a model for others.

The Alliance for Innovation, an international network of governments and partners, presents these awards as a way to honor and promote innovations in the field of local government. Catawba County's project was one of 10 local government programs that received the award Wednesday, April 23.

The Child Wellbeing Project works with families when children leave foster care under age 16 for their reunified, guardianship or adoptive families. These families are offered the opportunity to receive up to two years of extended services. They have a success coach, who works with them to enhance parenting, communication and other life skills.

The project also includes an educational advocate, who serves as a liaison between families, public schools and child welfare social workers to improve the child's chances for academic success. She tracks educational progress, makes sure children have the tools they need, and arranges tutoring to help children who are struggling academically.

The project also offers reading club activities and hosts other events to encourage family bonding and networking among parents. The goal of the Child Wellbeing Project is to strengthen families and improve the wellbeing of children who have been in foster care as they transition to adulthood.

"I am proud of all our staff across the child welfare continuum," said John Eller, director of Catawba County Social Services. "This award for the Child Wellbeing Project recognizes the outstanding effort of our employees on behalf of the children and families of Catawba County."

This award is one of many accolades received by the Child Wellbeing Project, which has been in operation since 2010 and is led by Dawn Wilson, special projects coordinator.

To see a video about Child Wellbeing Project, go to <http://youtu.be/cN5hOR5-3Sw>



Members of the Child Wellbeing Team are (left to right): Chrissy Triplett, post care supervisor; Lisa Thompson, success coach; Susan Propst, administrative assistant; Heather Ball, evaluation coordinator; Dawn Wilson, special projects coordinator and team leader; Ligia Cushman, success coach; Adrienne Overby, educational advocate; Shauna Heavner, success coach; Elissa Harrell, intern; and Jim Wachsmuth, outpatient therapist II.