



OUR HEALTHY BABIES ... NEWS ...



A group of mothers and grandmothers (left) in Belzoni gather for a Community Forum Meeting to learn how to raise healthy babies.



Tom Espy (right) addresses the group about the importance of developing a support system among grandparents.

COMING SOON...

The name of our newsletter, Our Healthy Babies, is to denote the fact that we all have the responsibility of making certain that our babies are born and remain healthy by supporting pregnant women and their babies. It doesn't matter if these moms and babies are within our own immediate families or a part of our church family.

This Newsletter is a part of a campaign funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to ensure that we support vulnerable children in our community, but in the case of this grant, issues related to toxic stress in pregnancy and ensuring that moms are aware of the overwhelming benefits of breastfeeding babies at least for the first six months of life.

The name of our project is called "Right! From the Start." It is an apt description of what the project is all about; you must get it right from the start to ensure the future well being of our children. It is our goal to publish this Newsletter at least once quarterly filled with informative articles and updates on project activities.

Did You Know?

Michael Jordan's mother provided her breast milk for him until he was 3 years old. She believes this helped him become a great basketball player.

Breastfeeding is good for babies' health: Fights disease; less ear and stomach infections; lowers chances for allergies & asthma. As early as one week of age breastfed babies have better motor skills, less high-pitched crying than formula-fed babies. Breastfeeding is associated with higher I.Q. Assessment Scores in grade school. Breastfeeding is not only beneficial for the baby, but has lasting effects throughout life into adulthood.

Breastfeeding is good for mothers: It lowers the risk of postpartum depression: Type II Diabetes, breast cancer, and ovarian cancer.

Effects of Toxic Stress on Pregnancy: Greater chance of premature birth; can hinder the physical growth of the baby's brain in the womb; and increases the chance of later health problems including anxiety and depression, heart disease, and diabetes and stroke.

Coming within the next six months, our new website: Ourhealthybabies.net

A new website is going to be a part of our healthy baby campaign. Although it is currently in the developmental stage, plans are for it to be an interactive site for pregnant women, new moms and anyone interested in promoting a healthy baby in their community. It will be packed with breastfeeding information and other tips for raising healthy babies. There will be much more on our healthy baby website in future publications.



Cassandra Brown (standing), a registered nurse, discusses the importance of breastfeeding and the outcomes of breastfed children.



Future Activities of the Project

Healthy Baby Sunday: We are developing a breastfeeding outreach campaign for churches. The campaign will be called, "Healthy Baby Sunday" and will deal with breastfeeding and other relevant maternal and child health issues. The Healthy Baby Sunday campaign will give information on how you can help your babies and grandchildren become stronger and healthier. We are asking each church in our community to devote one Sunday to activities that ensure that we support healthy babies. It will include informative and fun activities.

Healthy Baby Ambassadors from each community will spearhead our Healthy Baby Sunday campaign. Currently, we have four Healthy Baby Ambassadors, who will not only be active in our Church and faith-based organizations, but also in agencies working with pregnant women and children. Their goal is to take the message out to their respective communities of how important it is to support our children. Our first four ambassadors are: Rev. Shalonda Byrd, Velma Shaw, Christopher Carpenter, and Gloria Shields.

During the month of December our Healthy Baby Ambassadors along with the project staff had two introductory meetings in Belzoni and Indianola, MS with church leaders & church youth groups and other community leaders with over 50 people attending each session. The pictures in this newsletter reflect some of the illustrious participants we had at the meetings. Many gave testimonials about how they were breastfed and the impact it had had their health not only as a child, but also into adulthood.

Focus Groups and survey studies are being held in each community concerning

pregnancy, birth and raising a child, especially regarding breastfeeding. Participants of each focus group will be discussing each of these issues. The focus is on women who have given birth within the last two years, over 18 years of age.

We are partnering with community agencies to recruit participants. The University of Mississippi Center for Population Study is conducting this research with the "Right! From the Start Program led by the Women and Children's Health Initiatives and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. Participants in the focus groups are ensured confidentiality. Results from the focus groups will be used to inform the community of the needs of mothers and children in their communities.

Two focus groups were held in January 2014; one in Indianola at the Sunflower/Humphreys Counties Progress, Inc. with 20 participants and the other partnering with Aaron Henry Health Center in Clarksdale with 15 participants.

Save the Day for the community forum on healthy babies that will be held on Friday, April 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Capp Center on Highway 82 in Indianola, MS. The results of the focus groups and other research on issues relating to the health of babies in your community will be presented followed by group discussions and activities. Topics will include: issues related to toxic stress in pregnancy, benefits and issues related to breastfeeding, issues related to nutrition and how food-scarcity/ food deserts in the community affect pregnant women and babies. Flyers with information of how to register will be distributed later in February.

Healthy Baby Tips

Have you heard the old saying, "You are what you eat?" But did you know your eating habits might affect your unborn baby? A recent OP-Ed piece published in the New York Times, by Kristen Wartman, entitled, "Bad Eating Habits Start in the Womb" explores research regarding this fact. Researchers at the Monell Center, a non-profit research organization found that babies born to mothers who eat a varied diet while pregnant and breastfeeding are more open to a wide-range of flavors. "Infants exposed to a variety of flavors in infancy are more willing to accept a variety of flavors including flavors that are associated with various vegetables and might lead to a more healthy eating style later."

Another recent study conducted by the FoodPlus research center found that exposure to maternal junk food diet results in children with a preference to these same foods. Baby's exposed to too much junk food in the womb and through breast milk lead babies to crave more sweets, because they have received a steady diet of it before they were born and during breastfeeding. This puts babies who are formula fed at a disadvantage to experience new flavors, because the flavor in packaged formula never changes. So they are not able to experience the variety of tastes, as a breastfed baby. (New York Times 12/13)

This Newsletter was written in collaboration with the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi as a part of its Right! From the Start Project, led by Sandy Snell and the University of Mississippi Center for Population Study. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided partial support. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent these partner organizations.