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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COALITION HONORS FOUNDERS' COMMITMENT TO HEALTHY AC**  
Women of Vision See Fruit of Plans Laid in 1980s

**ATLANTIC CITY**—At a forum traditionally dedicated to an update on the health of Atlantic City families, the **Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Atlantic City** took a long look back at their Annual Meeting to honor those responsible for the program's birth some 24 years ago.

"This event is an opportunity to remind Atlantic City that it still needs to sharpen its focus on perinatal services and education for pregnant women and childbearing families," said Project Director Judith Stark. "We have built our approach from the work of our founding mothers, but there is still much work to be done."

One of those honored at the event was 87 year-old former Coalition member Julia Clanton. Clanton described the "uphill fight" she and the other founders undertook to bring their message of pregnancy health and planning to teenagers in Atlantic City.

"We used to go door-to-door, looking for young women," Clanton said. "But we didn't just talk to them about pregnancy and birth control—we talked to them about life."

Among the other remarkable women honored at the meeting was Diane Lennon, who took office as the first Coalition President in July 1985; Rosalind Norrell-Nance, who helped establish the community roots of the Coalition by hiring outreach workers to approach pregnant and parenting mothers; and Laverne Usry, forever remembered as the "first face" of motherhood in Atlantic City as wife of the late James L. Usry, former Atlantic City Mayor.

Celebrated in absentia was Gloria McClendon-Allen, who served the Coalition at the time when Atlantic City first rose out of the list of ten worst-ranked NJ cities for infant mortality and teenage pregnancy.

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Atlantic City Medical Center,  
Mainland Divisions

Cape Regional Medical Center

Cooper Health System

Deborah Heart and Lung Center

Kennedy Health Systems,  
Washington Township Campus

Lourdes Medical Center  
of Burlington County

Our Lady of Lourdes  
Medical Center

Shore Memorial Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-  
Elmer Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-  
Regional Medical Center

The Memorial Hospital  
of Salem County

Underwood-Memorial Hospital

Virtua Memorial Hospital  
Burlington County

Virtua West Jersey Hospital  
Voorhees

In a morning that highlighted the long-term benefits of early prenatal care on the infant mortality and teen pregnancy rates, it was fitting that a nurse brought down the house.

School nurse and Coalition supporter Joann Peoples, recognized an HMHB client pictured on an old program brochures. Peoples was pleased to report that thanks to the young woman’s involvement in the Coalition, she raised a healthy baby who is now an honor roll student. The woman herself, now a homeowner, also enjoys a successful career in the U.S. Army Reserves.

“What a success story this is!” said Peoples. “I just want to tell you that this organization has had such an effect on this young lady’s life.”

In 2008, the Coalition made progress with a pair of strategies designed to raise awareness of the need for Atlantic City mothers to seek early prenatal care. Staff pounded the pavement, going door-to-door to engage local businesses to support Coalition programs and clients. HMHB also surveyed Atlantic City women who entered prenatal care late—or not at all—to find their obstacles to care. Its findings have informed a new strategic approach for the Coalition to improve access for uninsured clients.

A third initiative, funded by a grant from Postpartum Support International, allowed HMHB to deliver focused education on postpartum depression (PPD) to Atlantic City moms.

“From their achievements in early days of the Coalition to their present efforts, our dedicated staff and volunteers recognize what Atlantic City as a whole should know,” said Stark. “Commitment to a healthy pregnancy and raising a healthy family is work that lasts a lifetime.”

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*The Atlantic City Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) is focused on lowering the infant mortality rate in Atlantic City with focused interventions for pregnant women, families with small children, and first-time parents. Its activities are overseen by the not-for-profit Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative, with program support provided by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services.*

*The Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC) is the state-licensed maternal-child health consortium serving the seven southernmost counties of New Jersey. SNJPC coordinates programs that provide access to perinatal health care, offer public health education, and strengthen families in an effort to improve the perinatal and pediatric health system in its service region. The Cooperative operates wherever its services are needed, always focused on the greater good—improving health outcomes for every mother and baby in Southern New Jersey and laying the foundation for a higher quality of service.*

*For more information about the Cooperative or its services, please call 856-665-6000 or visit [snjpc.org](http://snjpc.org).*



**WOMEN OF VISION.** Past and present contributors to the Atlantic City Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition gathered at Gardiner's Basin June 25 to commemorate their decades of service to the maternal-child health of Atlantic City families.

**Seated, from left to right:** HMHB Coalition Members Julia Clanton (former), Ilena Pitts (current), Elaine Jones (current), Rosalind Norrell-Nance (former).

**Standing, from left to right:** Current HMHB Project Coordinator Judy Stark, former HMHB Project Coordinator Sonia Cruz, SNJPC Director of Operations Suzanne Sawyer, and HMHB Coalition Member (current) Dr. Richlyn Goddard.