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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DO I REALLY HAVE TO STOP DRINKING WHILE I'M PREGNANT? Moms-to-Be Encouraged to Take a Pregnant Pause

Becoming a mom means big changes for any woman. As their bodies adjust to make way for the new baby, it's also a time to consider making a few personal changes.

This includes finding ways to limit or give up alcohol, and tobacco while pregnant.

"It is never safe to expose your baby to any amount of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs," says Debi Asselta, RN, Coordinator of the Salem and Cumberland County **Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) Coalitions**.

"Women who smoke, drink, or use drugs are increasing the stress on their developing babies. They are also risking low birth weight and early or pre-term births."

That's why the Coalitions are co-hosting two free **Pregnant Pause** events in South Jersey.

Pregnant Pause is an educational campaign that demonstrates the benefits of early prenatal care and the pregnancy risks posed by controlled substances. All mothers-to-be, parents, and child caregivers are welcome.

The first event takes place in Bridgeton (110 Cohansey Street), at the Tri-County Community Action Partnership's **Annual Community Day, Friday, May 7, 2010, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

In Salem, a **Pregnant Pause Baby Shower** will be held **Monday, May 17, 2010, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at **St. John's Parish Hall** (Market and Grant Streets).

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

(continued)

Guests at both events will sample delicious, non-alcoholic drinks at “Beverage Blast,” and will play health games like “Guess What’s Wrong in this Crib?” “How Fast (and Accurately) Can You Swaddle?” and “Dad Changes Baby Relay Race.” Pregnant women who get their entry cards stamped at every fair game are eligible for special baby shower gifts.

Both events are co-sponsored by the **Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative** and the New Jersey Coalition for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities/The ARC of NJ, with funding support from the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services – Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities.

Pregnant Pause Beverage Blast recipe books will be available for free to those in attendance. Beverage Blast contains recipes for healthy, non-alcoholic drinks for pregnant women to enjoy in social settings. These drinks are flavorful, delicious, and safe for mom and baby.

“Birth defects related to alcohol are called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs),” says Asselta. “They are the only birth defects that are 100% preventable.

“The Pregnant Pause **Beverage Blast book** contains recipes for 20 different, alcohol-free, guilt-free drinks that won’t risk their health or the health of their babies.”

FASDs are lifelong handicaps that result from prenatal exposure to alcohol. They can be as severe as incurable brain damage and physical deformity. FASDs cause learning disabilities, sensory impairment, and social delays. They are especially dangerous for babies born to women who drink before they know they are pregnant.

“The majority of pregnancies are unplanned,” says Asselta. “Many women who routinely drink, smoke, or use drugs may do so without knowing they are pregnant.

“Women want to do right by their babies,” says Asselta. “They become much more careful about what they put into their bodies when they know how it will affect their children. When we give them support and education about the risks of prenatal substance exposure, they are much more successful at changing unhealthy behaviors.”

For more information about Pregnant Pause, or to obtain copies of a Beverage Blast alcohol-free recipe book, contact the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative at 856-665-6000 or snjpc.org.

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***Pregnant Pause** is a community education campaign that informs the public about the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. The event combines fun and festivity with important information about prenatal care, childhood safety, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs), and community resources.*

***Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions** are county-based, all-volunteer organizations dedicated to improving the health of pregnant women and their children at a grassroots level. Members work to connect families with resources that help them become strong and independent. The operations of these coalitions are overseen by the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative.*

***The Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC)** is the state-licensed, non-profit, maternal-child health consortium serving the seven southernmost counties of New Jersey. SNJPC programs and services are dedicated to improving health outcomes for mothers and babies in South Jersey. For more information about the Cooperative or its services, call **856-665-6000** or visit snjpc.org.*