



Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies
Coalition of Camden City
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Community News That Travels

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Shining a Light for Moms and Babies in Camden

Camden Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-Healthy Start has launched a new initiative to bring prenatal and pediatric care to Camden city with the help of its religious community.

By engaging Camden's communities of worship, the Coalition is reaching out to audiences who have a common interest in strengthening the city by improving the health of its families.

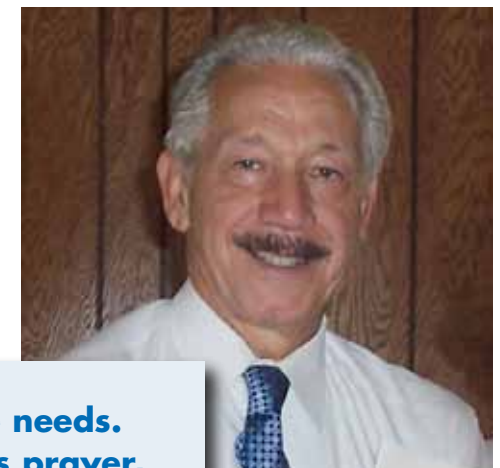
"The Coalition shares the values of the spiritual leaders of Camden," says Reverend Calvin Woods of Parkside

United Methodist Church, Chair of the HMHB-HS Executive Committee. "We enjoy a natural partnership with anyone working to uplift this city by preserving the health of its next generation."

"People who access the services of HMHB-HS know the Coalition does more than just meet their physical needs—it has a real concern for the quality of their lives," says Rev. Woods. "The Coalition tries to match resources with needs. Churches do the same."

The Initiative gives partners in every Camden congregation access to the knowledge and services of the Coalition, its staff, and committee members. This partnership is open to members of any faith that serves the Camden community.

"People just have needs," says Rev. Woods. "Sometimes it's prayer, sometimes it's food, sometimes it's a place to stay. We should welcome each other as partners in the mission of serving people."



Rev. Calvin Woods, Chair of the HMHB-HS Executive Committee, is energized by the prospect of the Coalition working with Camden's houses of worship to provide health education throughout the city.

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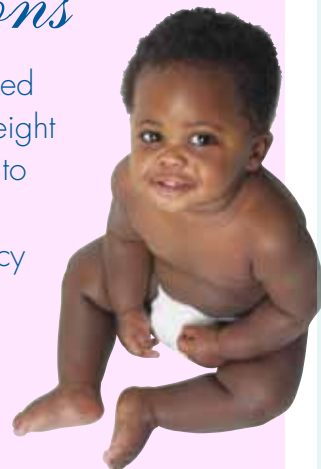
To invite a representative to speak to your parishioners about improving the health of Camden's pregnant women and families with young children, contact the Coalition at 856-963-1013.

Welcome Babies!

We are proud to announce that the HMHB family grew by 28 babies this summer - 12 girls and 16 boys.

Congratulations

to our client moms. They worked hard to deliver healthy birthweight babies (at least 5.5 lbs), and to make sure their baby had the benefits of a full-term pregnancy (at least 37 weeks). We also applaud the many who started prenatal care in the first trimester.



Camden Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition Meeting

Start the New Year right. Join us for the next Coalition meeting. Our agenda includes a special workshop on smart budgeting, including advice on using coupons to stretch tight dollars.

January 28, 2010

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

McGuire Gardens

114 Boyd Street, Camden

For more information, contact:

Valeria Galarza at 856-963-1013
or vgalarza@snjpc.org



Coalition outreach to the faith-based Camden community found a broader audience when HMHB-HS staffers Valeria Galarza and Marina James-Velardo discussed the initiative at the national conference of the American Public Health Association.

Reading through the Holidays



Every holiday season, the Coalition works to brighten the spirits of its client families with a special gift drive.

This year's 'Gift of Reading' campaign collected new books for nearly 400 young children (and babies-to-be!) for the Camden Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-Healthy Start and Nurse Family Partnership programs.

"This gift drive got an overwhelming response from many caring people," says HMHB-HS Project Director Remy Watkins.

"We are grateful to everyone who helped the children we serve begin a lifelong love of reading."

Sharing a good story has health benefits for the entire family, says Watkins.

"Reading to children from an early age is an important part of their development," Watkins says.

"It helps parents strengthen bonds with their kids, and improves children's learning, thinking, and communication skills."

To start 2010 on the right track, the Coalition is extending its book collection until Friday, February 12. You can donate, a new, unwrapped children's book at the Coalition office —

*2600 Mt Ephraim Ave,
Suite 401-3, Camden.*

Books are needed for both English and Spanish speaking readers up to age three. For more information, or to make a donation, call 856-963-1013.



A Good Beginning for Families

After its successful debut earlier this year, *Comenzando Bien* graduated its second class of Spanish-speaking Camden moms November 23, 2009.

Participants who completed the eight-session curriculum were honored for their commitment to planning and supporting healthy pregnancies. Graduates received commemorative certificates and celebrated with their families at a luncheon in the Coalition's Camden office.

The *Comenzando Bien* curriculum is based on educational materials from the March of Dimes. Topics include diet, relationships, and preparing for the arrival of a new baby. Classes are offered exclusively in Spanish.

"There is a demonstrated need among Spanish-speaking families in Camden

for culturally sensitive prenatal health education, and we're glad to offer it," says HMHB-HS Project Director Remy Watkins.

The course also helps familiarize participants with the prenatal services available to them in Camden and teaches them to be comfortable accessing these services.

"*Comenzando Bien* helps to break down barriers of language and culture that can keep women from getting access to the care they need for themselves and their babies," says Watkins.

"We learn a lot about our clients' needs through the program, which helps the Coalition succeed in other areas of service delivery for Spanish-speaking families. It's a win-win."



Even the little ones took notes at Comenzando Bien classes, as Spanish-speaking parents learned to prepare their homes for the arrival of new babies.

Comenzando Bien classes will resume in Spring 2010. For more information, call 856-963-1013.

Spotlight On: Behavioral Health Committee



Addiction and other mental health issues are difficult enough. These challenges become even harder when a family member becomes pregnant.

The HMHB-HS Behavioral Health Committee addresses problems that can arise from mental illness and substance abuse during pregnancy.

Key Issues

The Committee's goal is to improve the quality and availability of services provided to pregnant women in Camden who are struggling with addictions or mental health problems. The Committee also educates the Camden community to help residents better identify these issues and seek out help.

Achievements

The Committee works closely with Camden County jails to make sure

that incarcerated pregnant women receive necessary care and support services for addictions and mental health issues. Abrupt interruption of treatment services as a result of being jailed can be dangerous to mother and baby.

Committee Members

Like Committee Chair Dawn Wright-McCloud, an OB Social Worker at CAMcare, many committee members work for social service and health agencies in Camden. They specialize in fields like mental health, substance abuse, and prenatal care. You don't need to be a mental health professional to join the committee. Anyone with an interest in the Camden community and

behavioral health is a welcome addition to the team.

Events

The committee sponsored a conference on the connections among violent relationships, addiction, and pregnancy.

Identifying and Caring for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence was held December 7 at Malandra Hall. The event featured discussion

on local services for those dealing with domestic violence.



Interested in joining? Contact Suzanne Kinkle at skinkle@snjpc.org or 856-665-6000 x328.

FOT Primes Dads for Success

Luke Kusek had been through a lot as a parent by the time he met Henry Williams, Coordinator of the Fathers on Track (FOT) program. FOT helps Camden fathers support one another in becoming better parents through education, group discussion, and referrals to services that will help them in their goals.

Legal issues, including a messy break-up with his fiancée, had kept Luke apart from his daughter, Charlotte. Luke was confused and angry. Most of all, he didn't know what his options were. He just wanted to see his daughter. Henry introduced Luke to FOT, and things started to change.

"Henry opened the door for me to talk," says Luke, "and the program was a life-changing experience."

The first thing Luke noticed was how inclusive the group is. Luke, who was born in Scotland and has lived in many different countries, says he is "used to people sticking to their own."

"I felt embraced by the group," he says.

"We talk about our life experiences as fathers. We discuss our problems and we trade solutions."

Through the group, Luke reviewed his legal issues with workers from the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). With their guidance, he learned what steps to take to protect his legal rights as a father.

Luke also learned parenting styles that would work with Charlotte. Even though he and his ex-fiancée have not spoken in more than a year, he says FOT taught him to keep the door open for the benefit of his daughter.

"Two parents need to communicate in order to raise a child," he says, "or that child's going to learn to play one against the other. Even if the relationship isn't there between the parents, you can still be there for your kid."



Luke Kusek (shown here with Henry Williams, left) learned to refine his parenting style at Fathers on Track classes. In the process, he strengthened his relationship with his five year-old daughter, Charlotte.

Luke now feels confident that he can relate to Charlotte in ways that he hadn't considered before. With new parenting strategies, he says they are communicating much better.

"It's all about how to generate the right feedback," he says. "Fathers on Track taught me to think before I react."

The Baby Cruiser is published by the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Camden City, which is a program of the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative, and is supported by grants from the USDHHS and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.