Smoke Free for Healthy Babies

The March of Dimes is greatly concerned about the health of mothers, infants, and children. Therefore, March of Dimes is supporting Kentucky’s bill to prohibit smoking in an enclosed public place or an enclosed place of employment. In doing so, this bill will help protect the health of pregnant women and children.

March of Dimes urges pregnant women to stop smoking to improve pregnancy outcomes, prevent infant mortality, and protect their own health. We also support policy action to reduce exposure to tobacco smoke by pregnant women and infants. According to the 2014 Surgeon General’s report on the health consequences of smoking, there is evidence to support that smoke-free indoor air policies are effective in reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and lead to less smoking among individuals.

Kentucky has an average of 147 babies born preterm every week and 8 babies will lose their life before their first birthday. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that quitting smoking before and during pregnancy is the single most preventable cause of illness and death among mothers and infants. Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely than nonsmokers to have a low birth weight or preterm baby. However, women who quit smoking before or early in pregnancy decrease their risk of having a low birth weight baby.

Premature and low-birth weight babies face an increased risk of serious health problems during the newborn period, chronic lifelong disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities and learning problems) and even death. Environmental exposure to tobacco products, or second-hand smoke, is also unhealthy for pregnant women and their newborns. Exposure to second-hand smoke during pregnancy and after birth increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), a key contributor to infant mortality. Secondhand smoke can be especially harmful to children’s health because their lungs are still developing.

Please consider contacting your local legislators to state your support for a Smoke Free Kentucky. Call the message line at 1-800-372-7181. Ask the person on the phone to look up who your legislators are by your address and ask to leave the messages below for them.

Message to your state Representative:

“Please support the passage of HB 173 to help protect children and pregnant moms from the negative health impacts of secondhand smoke.”

Message to your state Senator:

“Please support the passage of SB 117 to help protect children and pregnant moms from the negative health impacts of secondhand smoke.”
2014 Perinatal Summit

Save the date! The Greater Kentucky Chapter of the March of Dimes will host our annual Perinatal Summit on Friday, November 7, 2014 at the Louisville Airport Crowne Plaza. More information and registration details will be available in coming months. If you have questions, contact Kara Brown.

Costs of Preterm Birth

The Huffington Post has published a commentary by Jill Teeters, the mother of 2014 National Ambassador Aidan Lamothe, responding to the current debate over the high cost of preterm birth. Her commentary can be viewed here.

Save the Date for KPA

Save the date for the Kentucky Perinatal Association’s Annual Perinatal Educational Conference. It will be June 1-3, 2014 at Lake Cumberland State Park in Jamestown, KY. To register, visit http://www.kentuckyperinatal.com/.

Join March for Babies

Take part in the walk that saves babies from premature birth and birth defects. They’ll be the easiest steps you and your family will ever take. You’ll have fun, too! Join the millions of people who participate to support March of Dimes research and programs to give babies in our community a healthy start in life. Find your local walk, start your own team, or register as an individual at marchforbabies.org. Or visit the website to donate to support stronger, healthier babies.

Centering Pregnancy Informational Seminar

In April, the Barren River District Health Department and the March of Dimes will host a Centering Pregnancy Information Seminar in Lexington. This Centering Healthcare Institute seminar will provide an overview of Centering Pregnancy as well as key information about readiness and the steps of implementation. Changing healthcare practice from individual visits to group visits is a big undertaking. It is important to fully understand the changes and carefully consider the adjustments that will be needed for successful implementation.

This one-day seminar provides information about the Centering model of group health care and the implementation of the model into clinical practice.

Topics include:
- Centering model overview
- Group facilitation as a way to improve patient education and engagement
- Clinical practice site readiness assessment for Centering
- Implementation process and options
- Evaluation as a tool for sustainability and outcomes measurement
- System change needs

It is recommended that a team of three to four individuals from a practice attend this session to understand the readiness components, implementation process and potential fit for their organization. This team should include a senior administrator, clinic manager, care provider and support staff such as a nurse or medical assistant. Other team members may include an educator, social worker or receptionist. The seminar is limited to 30 participants. If your organization wants to explore how Centering fits with your practice or organization, contact Kara Brown at 502-473-6672.
Kentucky Advocacy Update

March of Dimes Greater Kentucky Chapter strongly supports the expansion of the HANDS (Health Access Nurturing Development Services) program that is included in the current Kentucky budget proposal.

As advocates for the health and wellbeing of our youngest citizens, we are very familiar with the HANDS program and the benefits it provides for Kentucky families and the state as a whole.

In most families, grandparents, friends, trusted neighbors or church members show new parents how to care for their child. But some new mothers and fathers simply don’t have this support or help. Children don’t arrive with an instruction manual. So, the HANDS program matches parents with trained professionals who provide information, coaching and support during pregnancy and throughout the child’s earliest years.

HANDS has helped thousands of parents learn how to make good decisions for their children. The evidence shows the program also has helped families, and the state, by dramatically decreasing the infant mortality rate as well as the number of premature births, reducing non-emergency use of emergency rooms and reducing the incidence of child neglect. In addition, mothers who participate in HANDS are more likely to read to their children and take them for medical check-ups – both of which are key to helping them grow up strong and ready to succeed in life.

We recognize that Kentucky faces budget and revenue challenges, but we also know that there is no better investment the state can make than in programs that provide quality early care for our children. The proven returns on these investments will help us build a stronger state for all our citizens.

We encourage and greatly appreciate support of the 2014-16 state budget that sustains and expands funding for the HANDS program to serve more families in all 120 counties.

Eat Healthy for You and Your Baby

March is National Nutrition Month. If you're pregnant or are planning for a baby, a healthy diet is more crucial than ever. Your baby is counting on you for the nutrients he or she needs to grow healthy and strong. Learn more at http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/eating-and-nutrition.aspx.

If you are eating for two, check out this video from the March of Dimes full of tips about how to eat healthy for both you and your growing baby at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPjLJt79qYU.

Do you know how much food you should eat each day when you're pregnant? Check out this helpful chart which breaks down each food group and gives serving suggestions by trimester. You can share it with a mom-to-be! Find the chart at http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/eating-healthy-during-pregnancy.aspx.

Green is important every day, not just on St. Patrick’s Day! So on March 17 and throughout your pregnancy, remember to eat foods with significant amounts of folic acid--many of them are green--to help prevent birth defects. And, take a multivitamin each day that has 400 micrograms of folic acid. Visit http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/folic-acid.aspx for more information about folic acid.
Watchdog Group Honors March of Dimes
As Top Nonprofit In 2013

The March of Dimes is being honored as a top charity by Philanthropedia, a division of GuideStar. Philanthropedia is a web-based nonprofit group that rates charities according to their financial responsibility and outstanding work, helping donors to give wisely.

“We are pleased and humbled to be cited by Philanthropedia experts as a top nonprofit in our field,” says Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, president of the March of Dimes.

“Since our founding by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938 to find a vaccine to prevent polio, we have endeavored to achieve mission results and a high standard of excellence. Our mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality.”

Philanthropedia’s panel of 74 experts identified the March of Dimes as 1 of 16 high-impact nonprofits working in the field of people with disabilities, and named it second in that category. Starting in 1955 with a signature victory to eliminate polio in the United States, the March of Dimes has led many successful public health campaigns that improved infant health, including:

- Reducing serious birth defects of the brain and spine by 26 percent through folic acid fortification of the nation’s grain foods in the late 1990s;
- Bringing mandatory newborn screening programs to every state to ensure that each baby is tested for more than 30 conditions that, if undetected and untreated, can lead to serious disability or death;
- Launching a nationwide prematurity prevention campaign. The March of Dimes recently announced that the U.S. preterm birth rate dropped for the sixth consecutive year in 2012 to 11.5 percent, a 15-year low.

In addition to this new honor, the March of Dimes is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity and meets all 20 standards listed on the BBB Wise Giving Alliance Web site Give.org.

“We are very proud of our fiscal stewardship,” added Dr. Howse. “We receive financial support from more than 3 million volunteers, thousands of corporate sponsors, and state and federal agencies. With this support, we fund the innovative research, education, and community programs that are designed to deliver results and bring us closer to that day when every baby in every community is born healthy.”

Seventy-six cents of a dollar raised by the March of Dimes supports its programs. For more information, see the March of Dimes entry on GuideStar.org or visit www.marchofdimes.com/mission/where-your-money-goes.aspx# to see a graphic on how your donations are being used to support lifesaving research and programs. Watch and share this short animated video that also shows donors where the money goes.

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For more than 75 years, moms and babies have benefited from March of Dimes research, education, vaccines, and breakthroughs. Find out how you can help raise funds to prevent premature birth and birth defects by walking in March for Babies at marchforbabies.org. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org. Find us on Facebook. The 2014 March for Babies is sponsored nationally by the March of Dimes number one corporate supporter Kmart, Macy’s, Famous Footwear, Cigna, Sanofi Pasteur, Mission Pharmacal, United Airlines, and Actavis.
Helping NICU Families

NICU Family Support is one of the ways that the March of Dimes is supporting families whose babies were born sick, premature or with a birth defect. Focusing on family-centered care, NICU Family Support provides comfort and information to parents whose babies have been hospitalized in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). There is at least one NICU Family Support site in every state in the country. Kentucky’s site is located at Norton Women’s and Kosair Children’s Hospital—St. Matthews.

Mary Beth Camp, the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Specialist, oversees the program. She works closely with a committee comprised of NICU graduate parents and professionals to promote family-centered care in the unit. This team strives to empower and educate parents throughout their baby’s NICU stay and ease the transition to home.

If you, or someone you know, had a baby in the NICU and you would like more information about NICU Family Support volunteer opportunities, please contact Mary Beth Camp at mcamp@marchofdimes.com or (502) 899-6693.

Mission Connection

While we are known for our defeat of Polio, March of Dimes continues to be a major funder of innovative research to help find the causes to prevent premature birth, birth defects, and infant mortality.

We are still searching for answers, but we have seen many major scientific breakthroughs over the years. March of Dimes has funded researchers who have been awarded thirteen Nobel Prizes, including:

- 1954 – Linus Pauling, who identified sickle cell anemia as a molecular disease
- 1962 – James D. Watson and Francis Crick, who identified the double helix structure of DNA
- 1969 – Max Delbrück, for discovery concerning the replication mechanism and the genetic structure of viruses

Today, our research investments are vital to the March of Dimes mission to prevent birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Through our Prematurity Research Initiative, the March of Dimes has funded 43 grants researching the causes of prematurity since 2005. Currently, March of Dimes is investing $88 million in active research grants.

March of Dimes research has touched nearly every person currently living in the United States. From finding the cause of and vaccine for polio, to helping develop surfactant therapy, March of Dimes research has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of babies in the last 75 years.