



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stronger-than-average babies the force behind new public health campaign

Knoxville, Tenn. — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) with help from Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett launched a public health campaign today aimed at improving birth outcomes and reducing infant mortality.

“To have stronger babies, we must have strong mothers, fathers, families and a supportive community,” said Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett. “I applaud our health department for finding such a fun and unique way to engage the community in a conversation around this important issue.”

The Strong Baby project uses lighthearted and attention-grabbing images of stronger-than-average babies to rally the community around the importance of changing the conditions that can lead to healthier infants and families. The educational campaign focuses on the importance of early and adequate prenatal care, breastfeeding, good nutrition, avoiding tobacco, and many other healthy behaviors.

“Too many of our babies are born too small, too soon or with too many health issues,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “The babies in this campaign have captured our hearts and made us smile. We hope they will also capture the attention of our community so that together we can help more babies become stronger babies.”

The Strong Baby project will be on billboards, in health care provider offices, at events and online. KCHD is also encouraging the community to share the images and information on social media with the hashtag #StrongBabyKnox. More information is available at StrongBabyKnox.org.

“Improving the well-being of mothers, infants and children is an important community health goal for us,” added Buchanan. “Their well-being determines the health of the next generation and can help predict future public health challenges for families, communities and the health care system.”

Based on a highly successful campaign created by Serve Marketing and conducted by the City of Milwaukee Health Department, the Strong Baby project is an outcome of KCHD’s Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) program, which is funded by a grant from the Tennessee Department of Health. FIMR is an action-oriented community process that continually assesses, monitors and works to improve service systems and community resources for women, infants and families.

While not all pregnancy complications can be prevented, women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and detecting problems early. Infant mortality, defined as the death of an infant before his or her first birthday, is higher for those born to mothers who receive

inadequate prenatal care, and in 2013 only 70% of women in Knox County received early, adequate prenatal care. Babies born just a few weeks early have higher rates of hospitalization and illness versus full-term infants. In fact, complications of prematurity was the leading cause of infant death in 2014. Approximately 11 percent of infants in Tennessee were born premature in 2013. That same year, 8.4 percent of babies in Knox County were born with a low birth weight; and, black infants were born with a low birth weight at nearly twice the rate of white infants.

About Knox County Health Department:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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