

# Foot Prints



Healthier Moms & Babies



Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2011

## Healthier Moms & Babies

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### Healthier Moms and Babies Begins Services to Burmese

Healthier Moms and Babies has begun serving Burmese pregnant women with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the City of Fort Wayne. Working with the Neighborhood Action Center at Autumn Woods Apartments, we are offering a five part prenatal class to the women in the complex. The first series of classes began on November 16, and the second series to a new group of women will begin in January.

In addition, we will work individually with pregnant women who cannot attend the classes at the Neighborhood Action Center. This is possible with the addition of a part-time Burmese Liaison/Interpreter, Chaw Su. Chaw Su began work at Healthier Moms and Babies on October 17 and works 16 hours a week. Her position was made possible by the CDBG grant and from staffing reallocations after a staff resignation.

Healthier Moms and Babies Director Sally Edington noted, "We've been wanting to serve Burmese women for several years, and we were fortunately that working with immigrant and refugee populations was a CDBG priority this year. There are also more Burmese interpreters available now than in the past, which helps us tremendously. So far, it's been a very positive experience for the women in the class and for our staff!"

During the first class, one of the participants said that even though she already has two children, she understands much more about this pregnancy than her previous ones. Our staff is also learning about Burmese culture. At the second class, two of the three participants asked that we not take a picture of them in the class for religious reasons.

### Meet our New Staff

**Judy Meiklejohn** started at Healthier Moms and Babies on September 26. She grew up in Lansing, Michigan. She graduated for Michigan State University with a major in Health Education. She has worked at the McMillan Center for Health Education, the YMCA, Children's First in Auburn and Community Action of Northeast Indiana in addition to teaching.

Judy is married to Kurt. They lived in Liverpool, New York near Syracuse where their three children were born. They moved to Fort Wayne in 1991. Their grown son and daughter now live in the Indianapolis area, and their youngest daughter attends Manchester College, where she plays basketball.

Judy wanted to work at HMB because "I'm excited to be able to provide education, because that can help women make healthy decisions and choices during their pregnancies that will result in healthy, full term babies!"

**Chaw Su** was born in Burma, and raised in Thailand. Her family had to move to a Thai refugee camp when she was 8 years old where they lived until she was 16. Chaw moved with her mother and brother to the United States on Sept 11, 2004.

Chaw graduated from Northside High School with honors in 2008. She worked at Catholic Charities for three years as a Refugee Health Advocate, and she is the mother of three children, 5 and 3 year old boys, and a 3 month old baby girl.

"I am a mom, and feel that I want to provide education to Burmese pregnant women. I feel I can make a change for Burmese women to have healthier babies!", said Chaw.



Judy Meiklejohn



Chaw Su

# HEALTH CORNER



By Dr. Deborah McMahan, Commissioner of the Fort Wayne-Allen County Department of Health



This month I would like to share some new information we have about Pertussis or what is commonly called whooping cough. This is a bacterial infection that has recently been in the news

because of a large outbreak in California. Since the early 1980s, pertussis incidence has cyclically increased, with peaks occurring every 2-5 years. Last year, we had an outbreak of Pertussis here in Indiana. We had over 700 cases of Pertussis in the state last year.

Pertussis is very contagious and is spread from person to person when someone with the infection coughs or sneezes. Untreated patients, especially babies, can remain contagious for up to six weeks. The infection has two stages, a runny nose and cough stage that lasts for about two weeks. The next stage can last for many weeks and the major symptom is spasms of cough. The cough is so harsh that it can cause choking, vomiting and the characteristic whoop when you take a breath. Unfortunately, infants and older people can become quite sick with Pertussis and often have to stay in the hospital. Infants are most affected when they are less than six months of age and have not had time to complete the preventive vaccine series. Pertussis complications for babies include pneumonia and even death.

Unfortunately, infected mothers are the source of infection for many babies. Grandparents and older brothers and sisters can also give Pertussis to a baby. The good news is that you can prevent your baby from getting Pertussis. There is a vaccine that provides immunity for both Pertussis and tetanus for parents and grandparents and anyone who will be spending time around your baby. Be sure to ask your OB doctor or family doctor for this important vaccine and ask the grandparents to be vaccinated also. This will be one less thing to worry about during this exciting time in you and your baby's life.

## A Message from the Director



I've been thinking a lot about my grandmother lately. For one thing, I'm writing this on the anniversary of her passing. In addition, she was an Irish immigrant to this country, and I've been thinking about similarities and differences between her story and the Burmese women we're now serving.

Cecilia Carroll didn't have to leave Ireland; she wanted to. She could have stayed in Ireland with her mother and her two siblings who stayed behind. If she stayed, she knew the only work available to her was helping on the family farm and making lace to export to England. In her tiny village in County Mayo, there were few prospects economically or socially. She knew that even though she was leaving a beautiful country, she'd have more economic opportunity in America. (And now that I've seen Ireland and met our family there, I can't imagine how hard it was leave!) Seven of her siblings had already settled in Indianapolis, and they sent her money to immigrate.

She was also lucky that she already spoke English. Of course, her Irish brogue gave her away as soon as she spoke, and she and her siblings were sometimes discriminated against because they were Irish. But she could work and interact with Americans.

The Burmese in Fort Wayne are refugees. They had to leave Burma to escape political oppression or even death. They had to sneak to Thailand on foot where they lived in refugee camps for years, with thousands of other people in less than ideal living conditions until they were finally able to come here. For many refugees, this interrupted their education, and some are not able to read and write in their own language, much less English. Once here, adjusting to our conveniences of daily living and our health care system is a challenge. So is learning English.

With a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Fort Wayne, we're happy to begin serving Burmese pregnant women. We're happy to give them the same information about pregnancy and babies that we've been giving American and Hispanic for years! We're particularly glad to have a Burmese interpreter on staff to help us serve this population. And we're astounded at how much our new Burmese clients are learning about pregnancy, in spite of already having children.

To continue this work, we're going to need your help. The grant we received to begin this work won't last forever, and the needs of the Burmese pregnant women will be great for years to come. In addition, we have been flooded with requests for services from American and Hispanic women lately. The only thing standing between the unmet needs of pregnant women in our community and our ability to serve them is funding.

Now would be a great time to donate! A year end tax deduction for you, and for our community, better babies, one baby at a time!

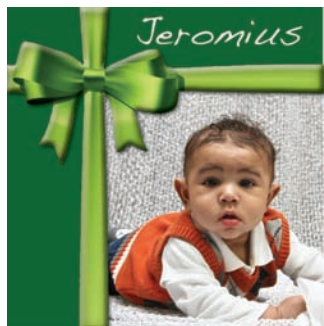
A handwritten signature of Sally Sington in black ink, accompanied by a small icon of two footprints to the left.

sedington@fwmepe.edu

# 2011 - A Year in Review



These 13 babies were born to mothers served by Healthier Moms and Babies this year and represent a fraction of our caseload.



Photos are courtesy of **Lesa VanMeter** of **Shadowlands Photography**.



**Society Foundation**

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**Better Babies One  
Baby at a Time**

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[www.healthiermomsandbabies.org](http://www.healthiermomsandbabies.org)  
Or give us a call at 260-425-3348

## ***Second Annual Community Baby Shower is a Success***

The second annual Community Baby Shower was held on October 20. Forty two pregnant women and their guests attended the event held at the St Henry Community Center.

The shower was a collaboration among many agencies serving pregnant women. The guests attended three short break-out sessions - one on Safe Sleep taught by Lanissa Maggart of Early Childhood Alliance, one on Breastfeeding taught by Joan Biancardi of Neighborhood Health Center, and one on Signs of Preterm Labor taught by Healthier Moms and Babies' Sally Edington. Over 14 agencies participated in the Social Service Mall, where the guests were able to learn what services are available to them and their babies. The shower guests were also treated to a light supper and had chances to win door prizes based on their participation.

The co-sponsoring agencies were MDWise, the Lutheran Health Network, Parkview Hospital, CANI, March of Dimes, Early Childhood Alliance and Healthier Moms and Babies.

