



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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St. Louis County's Superior Babies program earns national recognition

A St. Louis County program that works with pregnant women to reduce the number of babies born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and other prenatal drug-related effects has been honored by a national association. Superior Babies, a program of the County's Public Health and Human Services Department in collaboration with Arrowhead Center, Inc., has received the 2013 Emerging Practices Award from the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP). The award recognizes innovative and promising programs in maternal and child health care, and was presented during the AMCHP annual conference last week in Washington, D.C.

On Tuesday, February 26, St. Louis County Commissioners will honor those involved with the program during their Board meeting, which will be held in the Hibbing City Council Chambers, 401 East 21st Street in Hibbing, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Superior Babies began in 1998 with the goal of identifying and serving pregnant women who were suspected of or known to use or abuse alcohol and other drugs. Additionally, the program is aimed at increasing positive birth outcomes and normal growth and development of the babies, while working with the women to set goals that support recovery and self-sufficiency. The free and

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voluntary program provides scheduled home visits by both a public health nurse and a licensed alcohol and drug counselor.

The most recent formal evaluation of the Superior Babies program was in 2010 and showed positive outcomes in a number of areas. That year, 31 babies were born to mothers in the program, and 96 percent of the babies had normal birth weight, achieved normal APGAR scores and tested negative on toxicology tests. Mothers in the program reported excellent relationships with Superior Babies staff. Additionally, 58 percent had completed parenting training, 21 percent ended involvement with child protection, 50 percent were using mental health services and 42 percent were in a 12-step program.

“The cost to provide a lifetime of services for an individual born with FASD has been estimated at \$2 million,” said Ann Busche, director of Public Health & Human Services for St. Louis County, “so it’s important not only for the child’s sake, but also for tax payers, that we do all we can to promote healthy pregnancies and babies. I appreciate this well-deserved recognition for my staff and that a respected group like AMCHP has recognized our innovative approach.”

Superior Babies serves pregnant women in northern St. Louis County, offering comprehensive, on-going assessments, interventions, education and referrals for a broad spectrum of topics including antepartum and postpartum health, chemical use, mental health, relationship health, child growth and development, parenting, living skills, employment, legal issues and community resource connections. For more information about the Superior Babies program, call (218) 749-0600 or visit stlouiscountymn.gov.

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