

New Beginnings

MomsFirst provides support to expectant mothers living in the City of Cleveland. We are dedicated to helping Cleveland moms deliver and raise healthy babies.

One Life, One Voice, One Community & Baby Buggy Walk



MomsFirst partnered with the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Partnership to Improve Birth Outcomes to present an event honoring National Infant Mortality Awareness Month in September at the Harvard Community Services Center.

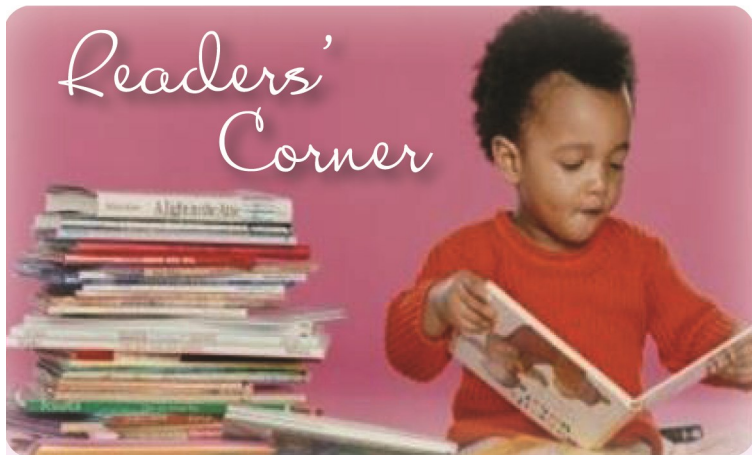
Approximately 250 people attended the event supported by the Ohio Department of Health's Ohio Equity Institute in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Neighborhood Leadership Institute, MomsFirst Project and Molina Healthcare. Almost 30 vendors participated in the resource fair, providing information on their services. MILOH Foundation, Inc. and Furaha Forever Productions were on hand to help families de-stress with painting, reiki and both shoulder and hand massages. While attendees enjoyed lunch, Rasheeda Larkin (Regional Program Manager, Government and Community Relations at the Cleveland Clinic) and Frances Mills (Director, Community Health Initiatives at the Cleveland Department of Public Health) showed clips and led discussion on the recently premiered short film, *Toxic: A Black Woman's Story* (for more information on the film, see page 3). The event culminated with the annual Baby Buggy Walk which featured information stations for each trimester of pregnancy and the distribution of many nice raffle prizes. Rave reviews from vendors and attendees alike; it was a tremendous success thanks to the hard work of the planning committee: Angela Newman-White (Cuyahoga County Board of Health), Lisa Matthews (Cleveland Department of Public Health), Marie Jones (Neighborhood Leadership Institute) and Kimberly Marshall (CEOGC).

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Readers' Corner



Ready to Read: Literacy Tips for Children

Reading to Toddlers: SITTING IS NOT REQUIRED!

When it comes to reading books to toddlers (among other things), it can be challenging and often frustrating. Why? As a parent, we may expect them to sit still and listen to an entire book and if they don't or can't we may give up or think there is something wrong with our child. When it comes to reading to toddlers, remember these simple words: SITTING IS NOT REQUIRED!

Wait...what? That's right! That short attention span, curiosity about the world around them and tendency to want to move around constantly is right on target for their development. So why should we expect them to sit still through an entire book? The answer is...we shouldn't.

However, from birth, reading and other practices like talking, singing and playing are essential parts of healthy brain development. Reading to toddlers can be fun and easy if we keep these tips in mind.

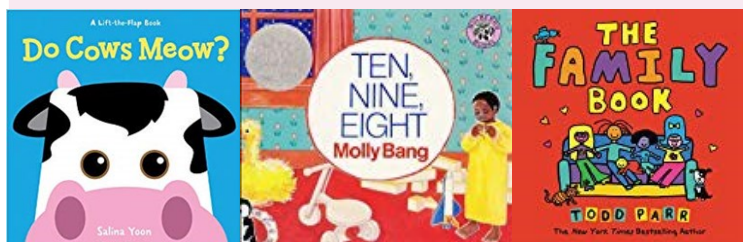
*Sitting still or even sitting at all is not required.

*Choose books that are lively and interesting to your child.

*Try to make reading part of a routine such as a book at bedtime, but a few minutes at a time several times throughout the day is good, too.

*Keep books everywhere... at home or on the go!

*Visit your library and ask the Children's Librarian for help choosing books for your little one!



☆ Service Spotlight ☆



Fatherhood Program

In August, MomsFirst began providing services for fathers and father figures in the lives of babies of MomsFirst participants. Ronald White, who has extensive experience through Boot Camp for New Dads, is the MomsFirst Fatherhood Coordinator. Ronald has been enrolling dads that are referred to him by MomsFirst Community Health Workers. He gets to know each father and they work together to figure out how best Ronald can be involved in supporting the family. Services offered to fathers include:

- ◆ Case Management
 - ◆ Education
 - ◆ Support
- ◆ Co-Parenting Support
- ◆ Employment Assistance
 - ◆ Bus Tickets
 - ◆ Pack 'n Play



Ronald White meets a father at the One Life, One Voice, One Community Baby Buggy Walk Event on September 28, 2019 at Harvard Community Services Center.

Contact Ronald White: Ronmoms1st@gmail.com

Racial Disparities in Infant Mortality Focus of *Toxic: A Black Woman's Story*

By Emily Muttillo, Center for Community Solutions, abridged from: <https://tinyurl.com/y4ctsl34>

First Year Cleveland (FYC) through their Pregnancy And Infant Loss Initiative (PAIL), debuted a short film that tells the story of infant loss from a black woman's perspective. As the film website explains, the film invites the viewer to *"Follow Nina in this day-in-the-life drama, and see the world through the eyes of a successful black woman who must navigate an unjust world while trying to protect the world she has created for herself and her family."* Funded by FYC, the film was developed in partnership with the City of Cleveland's Healthy Cleveland Initiative's Healthy Neighborhoods Committee and PAIL.

The film debuted at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History on September 25 to a sold-out crowd, and was well received by the more than 400 people who attended. The showing was followed by a panel in which the filmmakers and local experts discussed the reasons for making it, the



issues addressed and a call to action. The film brings attention to racial disparities in infant loss.

This problem is not unique to Cleveland. Across the state, many counties have racial disparities in infant loss with Black babies dying at a higher rate than white babies. Black babies also have higher rates of low birth weight and prematurity.

These disparities remain when controlling for income and education. A college educated Black woman of moderate to high

income has a higher likelihood of experiencing infant loss than a white woman with less than a high school education. A mother's poverty and lack of education is not the root cause of racial disparities in infant mortality. Rather, it is the structural racism that exists in our community which increases the level of maternal stress for Black expectant mothers and reduces their access to the same level of health care enjoyed by their non-Black counterparts.

Following the success of the *Toxic* premiere, many individuals and organizations inquired about showing the film to various interested parties. In response to this outpouring of interest, First Year Cleveland is in the process of developing a distribution plan with an accompanying discussion guide. In the next few months, FYC will unveil a process for community members, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions to purchase the film and discussion guide.

Upcoming Events

400 Years of Inequity: November 8-9, 2019, Public Auditorium, Cleveland. YWCA Greater Cleveland, First Year Cleveland, and founding partners March of Dimes, Michigan Public Health Institute, and Project 400 are hosting a national summit to commemorate the 400 year anniversary of the arrival of the first ship containing enslaved Africans, build an understanding of the connections between this history and the disparities we see today, and inspire action to create a more equitable future. To register: <https://tinyurl.com/yxmvg156>

News from MomsFirst

Our direct service staff continues to grow! Welcome to new Community Health Workers Tonya Jones (Lexington Bell Community Center), Marlene Ross (Merrick House) and Felicia Love (Friendly Inn Settlement House).

The MomsFirst administration office at the Cleveland Department has moved to a new permanent location within the same building (75 Erieview Plaza). Now located on the 3rd floor, the MomsFirst administrative team is settling into the new space.

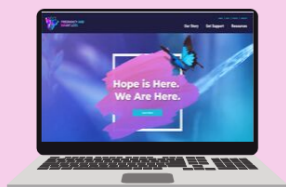


Michael's Corner Make Smart Financial Moves



Do you want to own your own new home? Harvard Community Services Center can help! Learn more about Harvard Smart Homes, down payment assistance and tax abatement by calling 216-482-5310.

Get Connected @



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HOME ABOUT HOW IT WORKS DOCTORS BLOG



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MomsFirst Neighborhood Sites

Friendly Inn Settlement House

2386 Unwin Road
(216) 431-7656

Lexington Bell Community Center

7724 Lexington Avenue
(216) 391-4100

May Dugan Center

4115 Bridge Avenue
(216) 631-5800

Merrick House

1050 Starkweather Avenue
(216) 771-5077

NEON

8300 Hough Avenue
(216) 231-7700

NOVEMBER is
PREMATURITY
AWARENESS
MONTH



PREMATURITY AWARENESS BY THE NUMBERS

#1

Prematurity is the
No. 1 cause of
infant death



Ohio is now 45th
in infant mortality
in the U.S.

African American women
experience the **highest**
rate of prematurity
17.1% vs. 12%



1 in 10

babies are born
prematurely in Ohio



80%

of premature births
can be prevented



A baby born **more than**
3 weeks early is
considered premature

PREVENTION

Progesterone therapy lowers risk
of delivering a preterm baby
by as much as **45%**



37%

of pregnant women who receive
the flu shot reduce the likelihood
of delivering a premature baby



Women increase their chances of delivering
a premature baby if they become pregnant
within 18 months of their last pregnancy



Cleveland Department of Public Health



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