



Tom Barrett  
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE  
Commissioner of Health

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mayor Barrett Announces Dates for 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Safe Sleep Sabbath**

*Partnership with Columbia St. Mary's and local faith communities seeks to reduce infant deaths*

MILWAUKEE – Mayor Tom Barrett has announced that his third annual Safe Sleep Sabbath will take place Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013. Prior to the Safe Sleep Sabbath, faith leaders are invited to an educational breakfast with the Mayor on Saturday, Sept. 21, at Columbia St. Mary's Hospital.

“Working with area churches, we are able to reach right into the heart of the community to share the message that too many babies are dying entirely preventable deaths,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “We are grateful to the more than 50 congregations citywide who united last year to bring a common message to our community. In 2013, we once again invite every place of worship in Milwaukee to join.”

The effort supports Mayor Barrett's goal to reduce Milwaukee's overall infant mortality rate by 10 percent and reduce the African-American infant mortality rate by 15 percent by 2017. Preliminary data indicates that 96 infants died before their first birthdays in 2012, the lowest number of infant deaths on record in Milwaukee.

“We know that approximately 15 to 20 percent of infant deaths in our community are related to unsafe sleep practices,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “Every person in Milwaukee can help prevent infant deaths by adopting and sharing the safe sleep message.”

“As our parish nurses and community health workers speak in the community, it is clear that awareness of safe sleep recommendations is increasing,” said Bill Solberg, Director of Community Services for Columbia St. Mary's. “Faith leaders who pledge to join the Safe Sleep Sabbath can help raise awareness and keep this important health issue top of mind.”

Along with not caring for a baby when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the City of Milwaukee Health Department and its Safe Sleep Community Partners recommend that families follow the ABCs of safe sleep, stating that a safe sleep environment is one in which every baby sleeps:

**A = Alone**

**B = On his or her back**

**C = In a crib, bassinet, or Pack n' Play without pillows, blankets, bumper pads or toys**

**S = In a smoke-free home**

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The annual event is planned cooperatively by the City of Milwaukee Health Department and Columbia St. Mary's. United Way of Greater Milwaukee, Church of God in Christ (COGIC) Northwest Jurisdiction, General Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin Inc., Urban Church Wellness Program, Common Ground Southeastern Wisconsin, and Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH) also support the day.

For more information or to register, local church leaders are asked to visit [www.safesleepsabbath.org](http://www.safesleepsabbath.org) or call the City of Milwaukee Health Department at (414) 286-8620.

*Media are welcome to attend the educational breakfast on Saturday, Sept. 21 and the Safe Sleep Sabbath on Sunday, Oct. 13. Speakers and clergy will be available for interviews.*

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