

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Officials Partner with Local Youth to Take Safe Sleep Message Door-to-Door

Common Council President Hines, City of Milwaukee Health Department, and Milwaukee Fire Department partner with local nonprofit groups to prevent infant deaths

MILWAUKEE – It is one of the most preventable causes of infant deaths in Milwaukee: Unsafe sleep conditions. On Tuesday, Aug. 27, Common Council President Willie Hines, Jr., Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, and the Milwaukee Fire Department joined youth from local nonprofit organizations Running Rebels and Safe & Sound to take the safe sleep message door-to-door.

“While we have made progress in reducing Milwaukee’s infant mortality rate, we continue to see a disheartening number of infant deaths in our city,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “This door-by-door effort will bring the safe sleep message directly to homes in our community.”

“Working alongside community partners such as Running Rebels and Safe & Sound is essential to continuing to share this life-saving message,” said Common Council President Willie Hines, Jr., who represents Milwaukee’s 15th district where the campaign took place.

This effort is part of Mayor Barrett’s goal to reduce the City’s overall infant mortality rate by 10 percent by 2017, while simultaneously reducing the African-American infant mortality rate by 15 percent. In 2012, preliminary data indicates 18 infants in the City died as a result of unsafe sleep conditions. Preliminary data shows that so far in 2013, Milwaukee has seen seven infant deaths that may be attributed to unsafe sleep conditions.

“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. “These deaths are preventable, and every person in Milwaukee can help by adopting and sharing the safe sleep message.”

Youth volunteers from Running Rebels and Safe & Sound distributed “Safe Sleep Home” signs throughout two local zip codes where a baby has died, asking each resident to become an ambassador for safe sleep.

“The Milwaukee Fire Department goes door-to-door each summer to share safety messages,” said Assistant Chief Michael Romas of the Milwaukee Fire Department, a Safe Sleep Community Partner. “Ensuring that families have the resources to create a safe sleep environment in their home is one part of that effort.”

Along with not caring for a baby when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the MHD, and 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:

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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

“This is a message that takes a long time to become adopted in practice,” Gary Mueller, Founder of Serve Marketing said. “If we want safe sleep practices to become the norm, we need everyone in the community to rally around the effort.”

The effort comes one month before Mayor Tom Barrett kicks off his annual Safe Sleep Sabbath campaign, in which area churches pledge to share the safe sleep message with their congregations. Churches looking for more information or to register, can visit www.safesleepsabbath.org.

If you or anyone you know cannot afford a crib contact the City of Milwaukee Health Department Cribs for Kids program at (414) 286-8620.

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