



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health

Joe'Mar Hooper, MPA
Health Operations Administrator

www.milwaukee.gov/health

Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building, 841 North Broadway, 3rd Floor, Milwaukee, WI 53202-3653 phone (414) 286-3521 fax (414) 286-5990

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2014

Contact: Sarah DeRoo
Office (414) 286-3548
Cell (414) 708-4060

Mayor Barrett Announces Date for 2014 Strong Baby Sabbath

Fourth annual collaboration with Columbia St. Mary's and faith community expands focus to top two preventable causes of infant death in Milwaukee

MILWAUKEE – Mayor Tom Barrett has announced that his fourth annual collaboration with Columbia St. Mary's and the faith community will take place on Sunday, Oct. 12, 2014. For the first time, the renamed Strong Baby Sabbath will expand its focus to the top two most preventable causes of infant death in Milwaukee: Premature births and unsafe sleeping environments. Faith leaders are also invited to an educational luncheon with the Mayor and health officials on Tues., Oct. 7, at Columbia St. Mary's Hospital.

“Working with area congregations each year, we are able to reach into the heart of our community,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “In Milwaukee, too many infants continue to die because they are born too small, too soon, and because of unsafe sleeping environments. We invite every place of worship to join in sharing a collective message that will help more Milwaukee babies celebrate their first birthdays.”

The effort supports Mayor Barrett's goal of reducing Milwaukee's overall infant mortality rate by 10 percent and the African-American infant mortality rate by 15 percent by 2017. It also supports the goal to reduce racial disparities in birth outcomes, set by the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families, co-chaired by Mayor Barrett and led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee and funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program.

Preliminary data indicates that 117 infants died before their first birthdays in 2013, with nearly 60 percent of all infant deaths and 66 percent of African-American infant deaths a result of complications of prematurity. Additionally, half of the sleep-related infant deaths in Milwaukee occur to infants who were born prematurely, making prematurity a significant risk factor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and accidental suffocation.

“Both prematurity and its complications as well as sleep-related infant deaths are preventable,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “Prematurity can be prevented through communitywide actions such as ensuring accessible high-quality prenatal care, eliminating smoking during pregnancy, and improving health and reducing chronic stress for all girls and women of childbearing age.”

“Columbia St. Mary's Urban Church Wellness program has built a strong collaboration with area faith communities,” said Bill Solberg, Director of Community Services for Columbia St. Mary's. “Faith leaders who pledge to join the Strong Baby Sabbath will be part of the communitywide effort needed to reduce preventable infant deaths in our city.”

The Strong Baby Sabbath is planned cooperatively by Columbia St. Mary's Urban Church Wellness Program, City of Milwaukee Health Department, March of Dimes – Wisconsin Chapter, and United Way of Greater Milwaukee's Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families.

Churches are encouraged to register at www.urbanchurchwellness.com or by calling the City of Milwaukee Health Department at (414) 286-8620.

###

Think Health. Act Now!

