



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Stars of Milwaukee’s Next Strong Baby Campaigns Announced**  
*Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families and Serve Marketing  
unveil winners of local casting call*

**Milwaukee** (December 18, 2014) – Milwaukee’s newest Strong Baby campaign stars made their public debut with Mayor Tom Barrett Thursday morning during a press conference held at United Way of Greater Milwaukee. The babies will be featured in upcoming advertising campaigns produced by Serve Marketing for the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (Milwaukee LIHF).

The 10 adorable winners were selected out of more than 300 who attended an open casting call on Nov. 1 at the BMO Harris Bradley Center and a social media casting call on the [Strong Baby Facebook Page](#). The winners, Karon (19 months), Mila (11 months), Aimee (15 months), Kaden (12 months), Zoe (17 months), Hunter (12 months), Mylah (8 months), Tyson (11 months), Hudson (9 months), and Marli (14 months) each received a \$200 U.S. savings bond and will appear in future Strong Baby ads and messages online and in the community.

“There are no better ambassadors for positive messages around improving the health of infants in our community than Milwaukee’s own strong babies,” said Mayor Tom Barrett, co-chair of the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative.

“We thank every parent who nominated their very own strong babies, and look forward to seeing our local children share positive health messages across the city,” said Shirley McFarlane, of Northwestern Mutual and co-chair of the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative with Mayor Barrett.

The Strong Baby campaign is a grassroots effort, developed in partnership with Serve Marketing, designed to engage the community in the crucial conversation around the importance of changing the conditions that can lead to stronger babies and help reduce Milwaukee’s infant mortality rate.

“The first goal of this effort was to build a strong and engaged social community, to turn parents and grandparents that live in our city into vocal advocates for stronger babies,” explains Serve Volunteer Creative Director Gary Mueller. “With a more than 1,100 percent increase in the Strong Baby Facebook community and an astonishing 67,000 interactions with the page’s posts, the effort is already a success.”

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, which is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program.

“This generation of strong babies will increase awareness of the kind of individual and community changes that will lead to a lower risk of premature births in Milwaukee,” said LaShawndra Vernon, program director for the United Way-led Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative. “We know we will not move the needle on this issue until we change the conditions that lead to poor birth outcomes.”

Preliminary data indicates that 117 Milwaukee infants died before their first birthdays in 2013, with complications of prematurity the leading cause. Nearly 60 percent of all infant deaths and 66 percent of all African-American infant deaths are the result of complications of prematurity. Birth defects are the second leading cause of infant death, contributing to approximately 20 percent of infant deaths, while sleep-related infant deaths represent approximately 15 percent of all infant deaths.

For more information about the cause, visit [www.IWantAStrongBaby.com](http://www.IWantAStrongBaby.com).

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**About Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families:** *The Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) is a community-wide collaborative, led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee, working to eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes and ensure more babies reach their first birthday. It is funded through the UW School of Medicine and Public Health from the Wisconsin Partnership Program.*

**About Serve:** *Serve is the country's only all-volunteer, nonprofit advertising agency, whose mission is to give under-served charitable causes a stronger voice in the community. Since 2002, Serve volunteers have created behavior-changing public service campaigns for over 50 local and national non-profit causes from Shaken Baby Syndrome, statutory rape and teen homelessness to foster care, gun violence and teen pregnancy. Most recently, Serve's work was honored by the White House for its role in helping reduce teen pregnancy in Milwaukee by 50% over the past 6 years. For more information, go to [servemarketing.org](http://servemarketing.org).*

**About United Way of Greater Milwaukee:** *United Way of Greater Milwaukee improves our community by mobilizing people and resources to drive strategic impact in Education, Income and Health – the building blocks for a good quality of life. Learn more at: <http://www.unitedwaymilwaukee.org/Newsroom.htm>*

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