



For Immediate Release

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

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720 New Parents Educated on Early Childhood Fundamentals

Hospital Visitation Program Celebrates First Year

CHATTANOOGA, TN-- In its first year, volunteers with a new hospital visitation program launched by Chattanooga 2.0's Early Matters Chattanooga Coalition have educated the families of 720 infants at area hospitals on the fundamentals of developing newborn babies and the free resources available to them.

"As we mark one year of this program, we are overjoyed at its success and the amount of families that have been impacted due to the dedication of our volunteers," said Elizabeth Cotellese, Director of Baby University at Signal Centers. "We look forward to expanding this program to educate even more parents on the importance of early brain development starting from birth."

One of the 10 Chattanooga 2.0 priority areas is to ensure that 100% of new parents receive the tools and resources needed to become their child's first and best teacher. The idea for the Hospital Visitation Program was created in response to this need by local organizations within the Chattanooga 2.0 Early Matters Chattanooga Coalition and developed by Signal Centers, Speech and Hearing Center, and United Way.

Currently, the goal is for every family who has a baby at Erlanger Hospital downtown and Parkridge East Hospital to be greeted by a trained volunteer with the knowledge of developmentally appropriate resources available to them.

These resources include enrollment in the Imagination Library monthly book program, Ready 4K texting program that sends developmentally appropriate messages based on the birth date of the child, and information on the Chattanooga Basics. By registering on-site directly from their hospital room, new parents leave the hospital with less paperwork, less things to do when they return home, and better utilization of the resources available to Hamilton County families.

"We are thrilled to partner with these organizations and sectors to build strong support systems with powerful tools that will help families thrive from birth through five," said Silvia Ramos, Director of Chattanooga Basics.



Hospital volunteers participate in a training program that includes practice sessions on how to speak to new parents and an opportunity to shadow veteran volunteers before stepping into a hospital room on their own. Parents and caregivers who would like to learn more about the Chattanooga Basics should visit www.chattanoogabasics.org.

“With 4,000 babies being born each year in Hamilton County, it is our job to provide all parents and families with not only a successful delivery but tools for developing a prosperous future as well,” said Don Mueller, CEO of Children’s Hospital at Erlanger. “This program is helping our staff ensure the parents that come in our doors leave prepared to care for their child now and into the future and are comforted knowing they are not alone. We are here to help.”

“Each child deserves the best possible start in life to help realize full potential,” said Jarrett Millsaps, CEO of Parkridge East Hospital. “The Parkridge East Hospital team is honored to partner with the dedicated volunteers of the Early Matters program to help provide parents with some of those important first resources that positively impact a child’s earliest, most formative years.”

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Chattanooga 2.0 is a community-led movement to transform education and workforce opportunities in Hamilton County. By engaging the Chattanooga community around initiatives to reshape and improve public education outcomes for all students, Chattanooga 2.0 supports local talent in taking full advantage of the workforce opportunities that are available. For more information about Chattanooga 2.0, visit <https://chatt2.org>. To read the 2016 report, visit <https://chatt2.org/report/>.