

2009 “Baby Bootie” Special Recognition Award:

The 2009 Special Recognition award is given to **Laurie White, RN, Maternal Health Nurse at Dare County Department of Public Health** and the **Piedmont Triad Chapter of Newborns in Need Program/Patricia White, President**

Laurie White has a long history of advocating for the health of mothers and babies in our community. She has been with Dare County DPH for 15 years working with the maternal health program and has been certified in completion of training for an enhanced nursing role in the care of maternity patients.

Dare County and the nation have experienced a shift in the economy leaving more women facing barriers to the access of health care services. In April 2009, Dare County had the highest unemployment rate, 14.6 percent, in the northeast region and one of the highest in the state. Health insurance is tied to employment and with high unemployment; we can expect to have more members of our community without access to healthcare because of the need to pay out of pocket. Dare County Department of Public Health annually serve approximately 362 women in our prenatal clinic. Over 44% of these patients are self pay, without health insurance. Many women will need an ultrasound during their pregnancy, but will not have one because of an inability to pay.

Laurie recognized this as a potential life threatening barrier for the pregnant women and their babies. She advocated early on for a method of making services accessible to those that cannot pay starting with the excellent quality of care that she assures in the prenatal clinic. She then took the additional step of seeking out grant opportunities to provide sonograms to pregnant women in our community who could not afford to pay for the test. Laurie secured funding through the Outer Banks Hospital Community Benefits and Health Initiative Grants Program and contracted with local providers to provide reduced rate sonograms to women, who would otherwise not be able to have this vital service. Laurie coordinates this program by making appointments, tracking funding and payment, and following up with patients. The result is early intervention and a potential positive outcome for the family.

As a result of Laurie’s efforts to find funding for sonograms, over 200 women have had this simple diagnostic tool completed. In two and a half years of this program, the outcomes have been significant. Several multiple births were discovered allowing for early intervention in the pregnancy to assure positive deliveries. Many life threatening abnormalities including intrauterine growth retardation have been ameliorated and two clients were found to have significant fetal deformities which were inconsistent with life. As a result the ultrasound findings, these clients had access to increased health and emotional support through their loss and grief processes.

The Piedmont Triad Chapter of **Newborns in Needs, Inc.** was established in January 2001 and immediately began to fill a void, providing sick and needy infants with free clothing, baby blankets, cribs, and basic infant care items that many of us just simply take for granted. Recognizing yet another need, the chapter responded and started providing clothing for

premature infants as well as bereavement layettes to those families whose infants did not survive. Under the direction of its president Pat White, the chapter consistently and diligently continues to spread spirit, charity, and compassion envisioned by the organization's founder by being a resource for mothers who, otherwise, may go without supplies for their babies.

The presence of Newborns in Need is evident within the community. By partnering with other agencies and organizations, the Piedmont Triad Newborns in Needs chapter demonstrates its collaborative efforts to help mothers and babies. The chapter has ongoing partnerships with Gateway YWCA, Forsyth Medical Center, and Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center/Brenner Children's Hospitals, and Catholic Social Services. With these partners, it holds numerous baby showers and collection drives each year resulting in a variety of infant and toddler supplies to fill a multitude of needs for NC mothers and their babies. After working tirelessly collecting these supplies, the chapter's work continues as they then deliver them to numerous agencies.

Maternity Care Coordination (Baby Love) and Child Service Coordination programs at Forsyth and Davidson County Departments of Public Health receive beautifully created fully stocked baby gift baskets, cribs, strollers, high chairs, plus baby blankets, of endless designs, textures, and colors, many of which are crocheted or knitted lovingly by chapter volunteers. Thanks to the Piedmont Triad chapter's efforts, health department staff members are able to give needy mothers with whom they work necessities for their babies.

So many of us envision a newborn baby going home to a nursery full of everything a mom would possibly need to care for her new child. This scenario is far from reality for so many mothers; however, more and more mothers and babies in NC have a safety net thanks to the vital service provided by the Piedmont Triad Chapter of Newborns in Need. This vital service enables and empowers mothers to give their babies the basics, which can raise their self-esteem and give them hope. The chapter is to be commended for its compassion, dedication, and hard work to benefit wee ones and their mothers throughout our state. Please consider them for the special recognition that they whole heartedly deserve.