

Wheel/Herald Also the Home
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SUPPORTING HANDS NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

By Theresa Nyquist

The first pregnancy for a woman of any age can be a time of uncertainty and for some new mothers it's hard to find a supportive professional with time and expertise for answering questions. But for the residents of Murray and surrounding counties a program called "Supporting Hands Nurse-Family Partnership" has been providing trained public health registered nurses for several years to provide a one-on-one relationship at no cost to the expectant mother. It's an evidence-based model that has stood the test of time, benefiting individuals and communities alike. Nurse home visitor Val Wagner explains, "The Nurse-Family Partnership is for a woman of any age who is pregnant for the first time. It is a voluntary program but women must enroll before the end of their 28th week of pregnancy. There are income guidelines and the services are provided at no cost to our clients." Val added that nurses arrange visits during the pregnancy, postpartum and up to the child's second birthday. "This results in about 50-60 visits over the course of two and a half years, so the mother and nurse develop quite a strong bond. We don't tell mothers 'how' to parent, it's more about guiding and asking questions that help them understand their values and beliefs." Val described three specific goals of the Nurse-Family Partnership:

Goal 1: Improve Pregnancy Outcomes by helping women engage in good preventive health practices, including obtaining prenatal care, improving their diet and reducing their use of cigarettes, alcohol and legal substances.

Goal 2: Improve Child Health and Development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care of their children.

Goal 3: Improve the Economic Self-Sufficiency of the Family by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

Slayton's Lori Sweetman chose to join the Nurse-Family Partnership two years ago when she was pregnant with her son, Bentley. Lori said, "Val answered my questions during pregnancy and I especially appreciated her support after Bentley was born. We met regularly but she was also available to me by phone so I often called or texted her when I had a concern. It was so nice to get advice from another person in addition to my mom."

Lori acknowledged Val didn't tell her how to be a mother but was more of a supportive professional. "Val was there to listen when I needed to talk. And sometimes my concerns weren't just about parenting but about other issues in my life. I absolutely recommend this program to anyone expecting their first baby. It was so nice to have someone there for me and I don't think you can ever have too much help. Though it's easy to see the benefits for a mother, child and their extended family, there are many benefits for the community as well. "We often see a reduction in the use of welfare and (government) assistance grants," increased employment for moms and improved health outcomes for the child," said Ms. Wagner. "And we increased revenue in the world that is a greater partnership (it) will be a tremendous benefit (to) the community." She said the program is provided by a physician but is an evidence-based model that has stood the test of time, benefiting individuals and communities alike. Nurse home visitor Val Wagner explains, "The Nurse-Family Partnership is for a woman of any age who is pregnant for the first time. It is a voluntary program but women must enroll before the end of their 28th week of pregnancy. There are income guidelines and the services are provided at no cost to our clients." Val added that nurses arrange visits during the pregnancy, postpartum and up to the child's second birthday. "This results in about 50-60 visits over the course of two and a half years, so the mother and nurse develop quite a strong bond. We don't tell mothers 'how' to parent, it's more about guiding and asking questions that help them understand their values and beliefs." Val described three specific goals of the Nurse-Family Partnership:

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The Slayton Legion along with the Quilters Club presented the Quilt for Cheryl Larson on Tuesday August 30th. They raised a \$2,150 dollars. Pictured here are the women who put in the time and talents this wonderful quilt. Pictured from left: Shirley Legler, Jean Sagvolden, Chaslon (Quilt Winner), Fran Hartle, Cary Nord, Bendine Byers, Stula Rens, Ruth Green. Back row: legion members Larry Dahl, Glenn Hartle, Mole G

Murray County – Wheel/Herald

<http://www.wheelherald.com/news/july-6-2015-news/>

Monday, September 5, 2016

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Slayton's Lorri Sweetman chose to join the Nurse-Family Partnership two years ago when she was pregnant with her son, Bentley. Lorri said, "Val answered my questions during pregnancy and I especially appreciated her support after Bentley was born. We met regularly but she was also available to me by phone so I often called or texted her when I had a concern. It was so nice to get advice from another person in addition to my mom." Lorri acknowledged Val didn't tell her how to be a mother but was more of a supportive professional. "Val was there to listen when I needed to talk. And sometimes my concerns weren't just about parenting but about other issues in my life. I absolutely recommend this program to anyone expecting their first baby. It was so nice to have someone there for me and I don't think you can ever have too much help."

Though it's easy to see the benefits for a mother, child and their extended family, there are many benefits for the community as well. "We often see a reduction in the use of welfare and government assistance programs, increased employment for moms and improved school readiness for the children," said Ms. Wagner. "And usually the father figure has an increased presence in the home and there is greater partner stability."

The Nurse-Family Partnership is not a replacement for the prenatal care provided by a physician but is an enhancement to that care and tremendous support for the early weeks of infancy through toddlerhood. Most often the nurse will visit her client in their home, but if the client chooses another site may be used. Interpreters are also available if the nurse and client do not speak the same language. Val stated, "This program has been available for 37 years and it has improved the lives of past generations, present generations and we know it will continue to benefit individuals and communities for future generations."

If you or someone you know would like more information or to see if you qualify, check the website at: <http://www.shnfp.org/> or call Katie Jensen at: 320-287-2585.