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Nine Months Makes All the Difference

Governor Beshear Proclaims September 9th, 2009, to be Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day in Kentucky

On 09/09/09, the date symbolizing the nine months of pregnancy, Kentucky will join the world in recognizing International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. Alcohol is more damaging to an unborn baby than tobacco, crack, cocaine, marijuana or heroin, and while many women stop drinking as soon as they discover they are pregnant, alcohol can affect an unborn baby even before a woman knows she is pregnant. The developing brain is highly vulnerable to the toxic effects of alcohol at every stage of pregnancy, and if a woman avoids alcohol for the entire nine months of her pregnancy, she will prevent the leading known cause of mental retardation in the United States: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

Every day, there are more babies born with FASD than HIV, Downs Syndrome and Spina Bifida combined. Statistically, over 39,000 Kentucky citizens are affected with FASD. Babies with FASD grow into adults with FASD, which means that many families face a lifelong struggle to help their loved ones find supportive education, housing, employment and social networks. Each of these families has their own story to tell.

On September 9th, 2009, the 384 members of Kentucky's Statewide FASD Training Network will coordinate activities across the state targeting local OB/GYN providers, middle and high school students, college students and the general community through information distribution, Public Service Announcements and training sessions. Although this is the tenth annual International FASD Awareness Day, it is Kentucky's first statewide participation.

Dr. Yasmin Senturias, Clinic Director of Kentucky's first FASD Diagnostic Clinic at the University of Louisville's Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center says, "There is no safe time, no safe type and no safe amount of alcohol if a woman is pregnant or could become pregnant. This statewide awareness event is necessary to educate communities about the importance of supporting women to have an entirely alcohol-free pregnancy and avoid the devastating, lifelong consequences of FASD. This is a disability that is 100% preventable."

For more information about Kentucky's FASD Awareness Day events in your area or to interview a family living with FASD, please contact Laura Nagle, Kentucky's FASD Prevention Enhancement Site Coordinator at Lmnagle@bluegrass.org or 859-624-3622, x732.