



NEWS RELEASE

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OVER 1,000 PREGNANT COLORADO WOMEN QUIT SMOKING THANKS TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH PLANS FOUNDATION PROGRAM

Baby & Me - Tobacco Free Prenatal Smoking Cessation Program Now in 53 Colorado
Counties, Statistics Show Most Remain Smoke Free

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – The statistics tell the story: Rocky Mountain Health Plans Foundation’s [*Baby & Me - Tobacco Free*](#) prenatal smoking cessation program has touched the lives of hundreds of women in Colorado, helping them quit smoking during their pregnancy and stay smoke free after their baby is born. To date over 1,500 women have enrolled in the program. Of those who quit, 66% have continued to remain smoke free for at least 3 months after their child’s birth.

Baby & Me, Tobacco Free is an incentive-based program introduced in 16 Colorado counties in 2008. It has since expanded to 53 counties across the state. A doctor, clinic or local health department can refer pregnant women to the program, where they receive smoking cessation counseling before and after giving birth. Each month they remain tobacco free they get an incentive that every new mom values: a voucher for free diapers. The program has distributed over 2,900 vouchers, each representing a smoke free month for a new mother.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smoking before and during pregnancy is the single most preventable cause of illness and death among mothers and infants. Babies born to women who smoke have 30% higher odds of being born prematurely, and are more likely to be born with low birth weight, increasing their risk for illness or death. “The health problems don’t end when the baby goes home,” says Lisa Fenton Free, executive director of Rocky Mountain Health Plans Foundation.

Women who continue to smoke after delivery also place their children at risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for

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sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear infections and more severe asthma.

“The *Baby & Me, Tobacco Free* program gives pregnant women who smoke the support and tools they need to create a healthy, smoke-free environment for their baby,” says Fenton Free.

Developed in western New York State in 2001, *Baby & Me – Tobacco Free* was expanded into Colorado through a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation, with additional funding from Rocky Mountain Health Plans. Colorado is the first state to expand the program nearly statewide.

Programs are community based, and are located in local health departments, clinics or other agencies serving pregnant women. The vast majority of the women in the program are low income.

Hope Cook, RN, of the Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurse Association, in Steamboat Springs, appreciates the opportunity to work directly with pregnant women as they break the habit of smoking. “I just encourage them, jump up and down, and say, ‘Wow, you’re doing such a great thing for yourself and your child,’” Cook said. “And I think they get that. Once they start on the path of not smoking and enter that world of nonsmokers, they think it’s a nice place to be.”

Stories of Success

Miranda Long, a graduate of the program in Delta, had been a smoker on and off for five or six years. She made the decision to quit smoking when she became pregnant and turned for help to Karen O’Brien, RN, manager of the *Baby & Me – Tobacco Free* program at Delta County Public Health Department.

Miranda had tried quitting twice before, but started again each time. Though it got harder and harder to quit, this time she was determined.

Thanks to the support from Karen, Miranda said, "It was easy; I quit because I knew I had to," she said.

Inspired by Miranda’s determination, her husband, Jason Erickson, a ten-year pack-a-day smoker, quit cold turkey the day their healthy daughter, Neveah, was born. The couple is celebrating two years of being smoke free and expecting their second child, a boy, in early March.

About Rocky Mountain Health Plans Foundation

Rocky Mountain Health Plans Foundation was formed in 1997 by Rocky Mountain Health Plans to expand the health plan’s mission by bringing quality care to Coloradans outside its membership. When a health care need or gap is identified, the Foundation brings together the partners who can get things done

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and locates the financing through grant opportunities. For more information visit:

www.rmhp.org/about_rmhp/rocky_mountain_health_foundation.aspx.

About the Colorado Health Foundation

The Colorado Health Foundation works to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation by investing in grants and initiatives to health-related nonprofits that focus on increasing the number of Coloradans with health insurance; ensuring that they have access to quality, coordinated care; and encouraging healthy living. For more information please visit www.ColoradoHealth.org

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