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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DO I REALLY HAVE TO STOP DRINKING WHILE I'M PREGNANT? Moms-to-Be Encouraged to Take a Pregnant Pause

Motherhood demands many changes from a woman, including diapers, diet, and sleep patterns.

Debi Asselta wants pregnant women to add a few social behaviors to that list: the avoidance of drugs, drinking, and tobacco.

“It is never safe to expose your baby to any amount of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs,” says Asselta, Coordinator of the Salem and Cumberland County **Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) Coalitions**.

“Every pregnancy has a 3–5% risk of a birth defect,” says Asselta. “Women who smoke, drink, or use drugs are taking greater chances with their developing babies. They are also risking low birth weight and early or pre-term births.”

That’s why the Coalitions are co-hosting a pair of free **Pregnant Pause** events in South Jersey. Pregnant Pause is an educational campaign that demonstrates the benefits of early prenatal care and the pregnancy risks posed by controlled substances.

Two Pregnant Pause events will dovetail with other Mother’s Day celebrations in South Jersey. All mothers-to-be are invited.

One will be held in Bridgeton at Tri-County Community Action Partnership’s **Annual Community Day, Friday, May 16, 2008, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** (110 Cohansey Street).

The other is in Salem on **Thursday, May 22, 2008, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at the **Memorial Hospital of Salem County** (310 Woodstown Road).

Both events are co-sponsored by the **Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative** and the New Jersey Coalition for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, with funding support from the Governor’s council on the Prevention

Atlantic City Medical Center,
Mainland Divisions

Cape Regional Medical Center

Cooper Health System

Deborah Heart and Lung Center

Kennedy Health Systems,
Washington Township Campus

Lourdes Medical Center
of Burlington County

Our Lady of Lourdes
Medical Center

Shore Memorial Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-
Elmer Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-
Regional Medical Center

The Memorial Hospital
of Salem County

Underwood-Memorial Hospital

Virtua Memorial Hospital
Burlington County

Virtua West Jersey Hospital
Voorhees

of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

At each Pregnant Pause event, women can sample flavorful, non-alcoholic beverages in the **Beverage Blast Challenge**, learn pregnancy health tips in the Health Hunt game, and win lots of take-home prizes.

Pregnant Pause Beverage Blast recipe books will be available for free to those in attendance. Beverage Blast provides healthy, non-alcoholic drink alternatives for pregnant women. These drink recipes are flavorful, delicious, and safe for mom and baby.

“Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) are the only birth defects that are 100-percent preventable,” says Asselta. “The Pregnant Pause **Beverage Blast book** gives women 20 different, alcohol-free—and guilt-free—drink recipes to enjoy without risking their babies’ health.”

FASDs are lifelong handicaps that include incurable brain damage and physical deformity. They result from drinking alcohol during pregnancy. FASDs cause learning disabilities, sensory impairment, and social delays. They are especially dangerous to women who drink but don’t know they are pregnant.

“The majority of pregnancies are unplanned,” says Asselta, “and many women who don’t know they are pregnant may drink, smoke, or use drugs. That’s why Pregnant Pause is an especially important community health resource.”

“Women want to do right by their babies,” says Asselta. “When we give them healthy alternatives and educate them about the risks, they become much more careful about what they put into their bodies because they know how it will affect their children.”

For more information about Pregnant Pause, or to obtain copies of a Beverage Blast alcohol-free recipe book, contact the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative at 856-665-6000 or snjpc.org.

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***Pregnant Pause** is a community education campaign that informs the public about the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. The event combines fun and festivity with important information about prenatal care, childhood safety, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs), and community resources.*

***Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions** are county-based, all-volunteer organizations dedicated to improving the health of pregnant women and their children at a grassroots level. Members work to connect families with resources that help them become strong and independent. The operations of these coalitions are overseen by the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative.*

***The Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC)** is the state-licensed, non-profit, maternal-child health consortium serving the seven southernmost counties of New Jersey. SNJPC programs and services are dedicated to improving health outcomes for mothers and babies in South Jersey. For more information about the Cooperative or its services, call **856-665-6000** or visit snjpc.org.*