

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford County Public Schools Launch Heartwarming 'Readiness Bags' Initiative for New Moms with Community Partners

A new initiative aimed at supporting new mothers in Harford County was officially launched today with the first delivery of Readiness Bags to new mothers in the maternity unit of the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center Bel Air (UM UCMC Bel Air). The project, a collaboration between Harford County Public Schools (HCPS), Harford County Education Foundation, the Harford County Health Department (HCHD), and the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health, seeks to provide comfort and resources to new mothers as they begin their journey into parenthood.

The Readiness Bags, filled with a soft onesie for newborns, educational materials, and early learning manipulatives, are designed to offer both immediate comfort and long-term benefits for the health and development of the child. This initiative reflects the commitment of local organizations to the well-being and educational success of Harford County's youngest residents.

Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools, highlighted the significance of the program, stating, "This initiative represents the kind of community partnership that truly makes a difference. By supporting new mothers, we are laying the foundation for a healthier and more educated future for our children."

The goal of the program is to provide 1,000 Readiness Bags each year, with quarterly deliveries to UM UCMC Bel Air.

"We are delighted to partner in this initiative," said Elizabeth Wise, President and CEO of the UM Upper Chesapeake Health. "These Readiness Bags are a wonderful way to show new mothers in our community that they are supported and valued. It's about more than just the items in the bag – it's about showing care and providing the tools to help their children thrive from the start."

Debora Merlock, President of Harford County Education Foundation, added, "This project is close to our hearts because it's about nurturing the potential of every child from the very beginning. We're excited to see how these resources will benefit our community."

"The Harford County Health Department focuses many of its services on the health and well-being of babies, children and families," added Harford County Health Officer Marcy Austin. "The Readiness Bag initiative provides moms and their babies with a great start to feeling supported by our community. The Harford County Health Department appreciates every opportunity to partner with Harford County Public Schools, the UM Upper Chesapeake Health, and Harford County Education Foundation on any and all health and education efforts."

Harford County Public Schools, Harford County Education Foundation, the Harford County Health Department, and Upper Chesapeake Medical Center will continue to work together to support this initiative, ensuring that every new mother who gives birth within the UM Upper Chesapeake Health System has access to these valuable resources.



(From L-R): Kathy Griffin, Coordinator for Early Childhood Programs, HCPS; Melissa Romano, Coordinator of Special Education Birth-5, HCPS; Debora Merlock, Founder and President, Harford County Education Foundation; Bernard "Buck" Hennigan, Executive Director of Student Support Services, HCPS; Jennifer Thomas, RN Resource Nurse for Family Birthplace and Pediatrics, University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health; Wendy Furrow, RN Educator for Family Birthplace and Pediatrics, University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health; Stephen Smith; Samantha Sauer; Kai Smith (baby); Annmarie Moore, Nurse Manager for Family Birthplace and Pediatrics, University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health; Mary Beth Stapleton, Manager of Family and Community Partnerships, HCPS; Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent, HCPS; Dr. Eric Davis, Chief of Administration, HCPS



*(From L-R): Stephen Smith; Kai Smith; Samantha Sauer
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