

# South Carolina First Steps e-Spotlight

September 26, 2016



## Colleton County First Steps Invests Early Through Partnership with Local Hospital

Studies consistently show that the highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible. For Colleton County First Steps (CCFS), one way to ensure early investment is to provide literacy materials and resources to new mothers at the local hospital when they give birth.

Two years ago, CCFS Executive Director Cindy Dickerson met with the labor and delivery staff at Colleton Medical Center to discuss her idea to provide resource bags to new mothers. With support from the local community organizations for the resource bags, Mrs. Dickerson and the hospital staff have been able to form a successful partnership consisting of creating, promoting, and distributing the bags to all mothers who give birth at the hospital.

In a canvass First Steps tote, these new mothers receive age-appropriate books, parent teaching strategies, a healthy recipes cookbook, health materials such as a toothbrush, information about resources in the area that are available to parents of young children, a book explaining what to expect during the first year of their child's life, and First Steps program information. The bag also includes a calendar provided by the library that provides activities the parents can do with their child each day of the year. In 2015-16, approximately 350 bags were provided to new mothers and their babies.



*Colleton County First Steps Executive Director Cindy Dickerson with Lori Litchfield, Supervisor of the Labor & Delivery Unit at Colleton Medical Center.*



*A mother who won CCFS quarterly raffle received a basket of educational resources and books for her children*

To encourage participants to provide contact information and to recruit new families to the programs offered by CCFS, a self-addressed card is provided for the parents to return to the First Steps office. The staff at the hospital have been very excited about the strategy and encourage new mothers to complete the cards. A drawing is held every three months for those mothers who have filled out the contact information card and a basket is awarded with additional books, educational resources, and items that can be used for their child. Last year, 60% of parents who received the gift bags provided their contact information.

In 2016-17, CCFS plans to expand this strategy by hosting quarterly meetings for all new mothers and their children that have provided their contact information. The first meeting will be held on November 10<sup>th</sup> and will feature a variety of community organizations and resources. At the event, SC Beginnings will provide hearing tests

for all children, the Colleton County Art Council will help children decorate clay pots, the children's librarian will read a story to the children, and CCFS will be giving away free diapers and books to all attendees. In addition, this year, Molina Health will be donating 300 diaper bags to the CCFS which will include items such as bottles, thermometers, stuffed animals, and other resources. At the event, Molina Health will bring their mascot "Cleo the Cat" to entertain the children and will provide refreshments, including smoothies from a smoothie making machine.

Through this strategy, Colleton County First Steps not only invests in the healthy development of their county's children from birth, but has also found a way to reach families that might be in need of additional supports and services. CCFS uses the information parents provide to contact them and connect them to opportunities and resources within their community, including First Steps programs.

**For more information on CCFS' hospital resource bag program and their partnerships with local organizations, please contact CCFS Executive Director Cindy Dickerson at [CDickerson@scfirststeps.org](mailto:CDickerson@scfirststeps.org).**