

eliminating racism empowering women

ywca news release

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KALAMAZOO INFANT MORTALITY COMMUNITY ACTION INITIATIVE: COLLECTIVE IMPACT WORKSHOP

For Immediate Release
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The YWCA of Kalamazoo and the Kalamazoo Infant Mortality Community Action Initiative (KIMCAI) are calling for community action at the *Collective Impact Workshop* on Thursday, March 12, 2015; the follow up meeting to the November 21 kick-off event which addressed the racial disparities in the infant mortality rates in Kalamazoo County. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the infant mortality rate in ethnic minorities to six in Kalamazoo by 2020, reflecting the national goal of the Healthy People program through the Center for Disease Control.

Grace Lubwama, CEO of the YWCA Kalamazoo states, “Infant mortality is a key indicator of how well a community is doing and we are a community of the Kalamazoo Promise. In order for all children to fulfill the dream of the Promise, we have to be a community that allows our most vulnerable to celebrate their first birthdays. The reality is that the children in this community, be it one or one thousand, will never experience the Promise until we reduce the infant mortality rate.”

The Collective Impact Workshop seeks to identify health and service gaps that exist within the Kalamazoo community and create action plans which can be executed within five focus areas as they relate to race and poverty and its impact on infant mortality. The five focus areas include infant safety, maternal wellbeing, infant wellbeing, women’s empowerment, and strengthening families.

At the Collective Impact Workshop, participants will breakout into workgroups that concentrate on one of the five focus areas to map out where Kalamazoo programs are strong, where improvement can be made, and where services don’t yet exist, but should. Answering these questions is imperative to gaining an understanding of where the gaps in services exist and developing systems that address them. It will also help identify the population that is overlooked and which women are high risk for poor birth outcomes.

At the conclusion of the workshop, next steps will have been identified within each workgroup and collectively. The initiative will move forward based on these findings to develop a data driven strategic framework.

Lucinda M. Stinson, MPA, Deputy Director-Community Services of Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services states, “The high rates and inequities that face our community when we look at infant mortality rates is simply unacceptable. It is unacceptable that a black baby in our community dies at a higher rate than white babies. KCHCS has a rich history working with our expectant mothers and families and continues to do so through community based programs like Healthy Babies Healthy Start, Nurse Family Partnership and Health Families America. Our department strongly believes that simply talking about issues of concern paired with inaction is unacceptable and as such is honored to serve the community as a part of the Infant Mortality

Initiative – an initiative that is founded in action and will develop and execute a concrete plan for action to diminish the disparities in infant mortality for Kalamazoo.”

The community is invited to join us on Thursday, March 12, 2015 from 9:00 am – 11:30 am at the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine located at 300 Portage Street in the Auditorium. RSVPs are not required. Visit the YWCA Kalamazoo website www.ywcakalamazoo.org for a dashboard pass, map, and parking instructions. Please contact Jennifer Frank Brenton with questions at (269) 345-5595 or jfbrenton@ywcakalamazoo.org.

About the YWCA of Kalamazoo

The YWCA of the USA, of which the YWCA of Kalamazoo is a member Association, is the oldest, largest autonomous women’s membership organization in the world. YWCA Kalamazoo is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The YWCA of Kalamazoo, the oldest Association in Michigan, was founded in 1885 and began as a residence service provider to young women who gravitated to the city to work in its factories. Today, the YWCA provides the only shelter, crisis intervention services and an array of post crisis shelter supportive housing options specifically designed and operating for victims of domestic violence and their dependent children; the only services of our kind for adult sexual assault survivors, including medical forensic exams in a non-hospital setting, supportive volunteers and counseling; one of very few licensed and nationally accredited child care centers that both offers tuition assistance and accepts government subsidies; and services to the community-at-large, focusing on racial justice.

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