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READ TO GROW'S "BOOKS FOR BABIES" DELIVERS AT DAY KIMBALL HOSPITAL

Each of the approximately 550 babies born annually at Day Kimball Hospital's Burdick Family Birthing Center now goes home with a new children's book, thanks to a Books for Babies partnership between the hospital and the nonprofit organization Read to Grow. Parents of newborns also receive a literacy guide as part of this joint effort to foster children's language and early literacy development, and to encourage reading aloud to babies from birth.

First-year funding for the program at Day Kimball Hospital is provided by an anonymous donor. "We are extremely grateful to the anonymous donor for their generosity in funding year one of Books for Babies at Day Kimball Hospital," said Anthony DiLauro, Read to Grow executive director. "Their investment in early literacy development will benefit children, their families, the community and the state, both now and in years to come. They have paved the way for other potential donors in the area to support this program by funding future years. And we are thrilled that Day Kimball has embraced the program and so readily committed to providing our service to parents and newborns in their birthing center," DiLauro added.

As part of the Books for Babies program, maternity unit nurses have started talking to parents about early brain and literacy development, and the important benefits of reading aloud to their babies.

"We are excited and grateful for the generous donation that has allowed us to partner with the Read to Grow Program," said Carol Howland, Day Kimball Healthcare vice president of patient services and chief nursing officer. She continued, "This partnership will provide colorful books on a regular basis to encourage early literacy for our Northeast Connecticut families. Read to Grow is the only statewide organization that helps parents take an active role in their children's literacy development beginning at birth. We have received exceptional feedback since its initiation from our community families and look forward to the positive outcomes as we prepare our future learners."

Day Kimball Hospital is the eleventh Connecticut hospital to adopt Read to Grow's Books for Babies program. The program aims to improve early literacy for Connecticut children by getting parents to read aloud to their babies from day one.

The organization also provides books for siblings of newborns as well as for children in the greater community to make sure they have books at home. "Studies show in low-income neighborhoods, children often have few if any books," DiLauro said. Connecticut Voices for Children reports that 21.5 percent of Putnam's children live in poverty. "Read to Grow is a resource for these families."

Research suggests that early exposure to a language-rich environment can significantly improve cognitive and language development and school readiness. The National Commission on Reading has said that reading aloud by parents is the single most important activity for building knowledge needed for later success in reading.

READ TO GROW

Read to Grow (www.readtogrow.org) works to improve early literacy for all Connecticut children. It is the only statewide nonprofit organization that connects with parents in the hospital setting and prepares them to take an active role in their child's literacy development by reading aloud from birth. Read to Grow also provides free children's books to families and to programs in communities that serve children of all ages. Read to Grow's programs currently reach 53 percent of the state's new babies and their parents, and distribute more than 130,000 children's books across Connecticut.