

Infants focus of county efforts

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the death rate for babies born before the 37th week. Deaths among these infants account for two-thirds of all deaths.

"We have no idea when it's going to happen," said Keener. "Nor do we know why women go into premature labor."

According to Keener, doctors do have a few indicators of premature labor. Doctors know that women who had premature births are more apt to go into labor early a second time. Women who are young and uneducated also tend to have a higher incident of premature births.

According to Keener, this year's drop is the culmination of a five-year decline in the infant mortality rate as well as increased emphasis on the education of young women about prenatal and postnatal care.

Keener points to several programs available to local women that have aided in dropping the mortality rate by providing counseling and education for poor women.

"We have prenatal clinics, the well child clinics and child service coordination, as well as

things like WIC, which help ensure that children are given a chance."

Featherston and Jeffrey are perfect examples the system working for African American women, in spite of the odds.

"They (the county) have good program for women," said Featherston. "They teach you how to take care of your baby," said Featherston. "They teach you how to hold it and that babies need a lot of love."

When Featherston, 19, found out that she was pregnant, she immediately went to the health department to apply for aid.

For Featherston, the aid came in the form of classes that helped her understand exactly what was going on with her body and how to ensure the best health for her baby.

Featherston says the programs that were most beneficial to her dealt with proper nutrition for both mother and child.

"They taught me that I had to get my nutrients," said Featherston. "I had to get mine in order for the baby to be healthy."

According to Keener, education is one of the keys to ensuring a healthy birth, particularly

for low income, young women.

Keener offered the following tips to parents.

- Have your child vaccinated against whooping cough.

"Whooping cough has not been eradicated," said Keener. "Many parents are under the impression that the vaccination will make their children ill."

According to Keener the incidence of "poor outcomes" from having the vaccination is much lower than the incident of "poor outcomes" from not having the vaccination.

- Ensure that your child has a safe sleeping position - on its back on a firm mattress.

- Do not send baby to bed with a bottle.

- Remember babies need special care until their first birthday.

Keener also suggests that mothers that fall within the guidelines take advantage of local and federal parenting programs.

For Featherston and Jeffrey, the programs paid off.

Bob Walton honored

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very special to me." Commissioner Lloyd Scher delivered the invocation in which he said "let everyone who enters this building remember the person it is named for, for he loved this community."

The commission voted unanimously in November to name the building after Walton. Commissioner Linda McCall challenged the vote in June asking the decision to be reconsidered because Walton was convicted of assaulting an

18-year-old male in a sexual encounter in 1986.

The vote was 5-4 not to rescind the decision and split along party lines. Ann Schrader, a Republican, voted with the Democrats.

Helms pushed vigorously to have the building named after Walton. He was happy with the dedication.

"One of the things we need to be reminded of is that our lives are filled with struggles," Helms said. "The dedication of the building is a reminder that we call all succeed when

we dedicate our lives to the service of our fellow man."

Walton's brother, Jay, Charlotte community development director, was pleased with the ceremony.

"The family is very grateful to the county, especially the county commissioners who voted their conscious rather than politically," Walton said. "Brother Bob always said people who need people are the luckiest people in the world. Bob Walton is the luckiest today because of the support the people have shown."

Central State progress

By James Hannah
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILBERFORCE, Ohio - Members of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus said Monday they were pleased with the direction of Central State University and the progress in renovating dormitories at the financially troubled school.

State Sen. Jeff Johnson, president of the caucus, toured two of the dorms under renovation and said it appears they will be ready for students when fall classes begin in September.

Johnson, D-Cleveland, and other members of the caucus also met privately with

administrators, teachers and students to hear their concerns.

"We feel there is a sense of priorities we agree with and a sense of momentum," Johnson said.

However, he said administrators acknowledged some fear about debts the school owes.

Central State, Ohio's only state-supported, traditionally black school, owes hundreds of thousands of dollars to vendors and faces a budget deficit of \$8 million. Also, it is expected to cost \$71 million to replace and renovate the school's nine dilapidated dormitories, which the state closed for safety reasons. Meanwhile, Central State

spokeswoman Anna Taylor-Clarke said the school is trying to resolve an outstanding telephone bill of about \$939,000. She said Central State is negotiating with Ameritech and has not been threatened with a shutoff of service.

Taylor-Clarke said some of the bill stemmed from "abuse of phone privileges" by students living in the dorms. She said a group of students used a special code that gave them access to long-distance service.

Taylor-Clarke said it appears the students had no intention of paying for the calls, but that the school is working to identify them so they can be charged.

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Piedmont Courts celebration
Residents and friends of Piedmont Courts community launch parade to celebrate the public housing project's 55th year. Dozens of adults and children joined in the activities. Piedmonts Courts is just east of uptown Charlotte, beyond the Brookshire Freeway. The community has enjoyed a renaissance of late, with a major renovation and upgrade by federal officials and an intense police presence to reduce crime and control unauthorized visits.
PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS, III