

HEALTHY LIVING

Cribs for Kids helps families, seeks holiday support

BY JEANNINE SATO

Durham Connects & Cribs for Kids

Where a baby sleeps matters. It matters to the parent, it matters to the baby and although it may not seem obvious, it matters to the Durham community at large.

Providing a safe sleep environment has been shown to reduce Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and having a safe place to put the baby down minimizes a parent's stress.

No one understands this better than Marleisa Scott. The experienced mom has several grown children, but a new chapter in her life has given her a 1-year-old toddler and a newborn. Times are tight for the Scotts and when it came time to bring her new baby home, Scott wasn't able to save enough to buy a crib. "I understand the importance of safe sleep. All of my babies were put on their backs to sleep. If I didn't have this crib the baby would have slept with me until I could save enough money to buy a new one."

A social worker at Duke told her about

Cribs for Kids and that she could purchase a crib for a nominal co-pay and some safe sleep training. "We're seeing more families who have less because of unemployment or family members not being able to help out as much," said Kathryn Keicher, clinical social workers at Duke Hospital's birthing center. "Families often plan for the baby's to sleep with them because they have no other place for them to sleep. We're trying to reinforce the 'back to sleep' message to reduce SIDS. It's wonderful to refer families to a place where babies can sleep safely and (where moms) receive safe sleep training," continued Keicher.

Scott was happy to join the program and was fortunate that Cribs for Kids had recently received a community grant and had cribs in stock. "They called me the next day, but they said that isn't always the case. Sometimes there is a waiting list. I'm very thankful. Now the baby is sleeping soundly in his pack-n-play and I'll be able to use it as a play yard when he gets big-

IF YOU DONATE

Tax deductible donations may be made to:

Child and Parent Support Services,
c/o Cribs for Kids
411 W. Chapel Hill Street, Suite 908
Durham, NC 27701

For more information, call 919-668-3295 or visit www.durhamconnects/programs_cribs.html

ger. It's a good program and eventually, I'd like to make a donation to Cribs for Kids," said Scott.

Safe sleep environments for babies ultimately benefit the Durham community as a whole by producing healthy, safe families. Cribs for Kids of Durham was established exactly for this purpose — to provide safe sleep environments to all children in Durham County. The program is a local chapter of the National Cribs for Kids program. Through an exclusive agreement with Graco Children's Products Inc., Cribs for Kids is able to purchase brand new "pack-n-play"

port-a-cribs for parents in need. The Durham chapter came to light when Durham Connects' home visiting nurses noticed a high number of babies without a designated place to sleep. That meant that babies were sleeping in car seats, sofas, air mattresses and unsafe adult beds, all of which have been shown to increase the risk of SIDS.

The program works by receiving referrals directly from nurses, social workers and family case workers. Families must be low-income and they must be willing to participate in a safe-sleep training session and pay a \$10 co-pay, which covers the shipping costs of bringing the cribs to Durham. "This is not a direct to public service," said Program Coordinator, Clarine Hyman. "We rely on a professional referral to help us help parents who are truly in need of a crib and wouldn't be able to purchase one otherwise. It's like our motto says, 'It's for the babies.'"

Cribs for Kids of Durham is funded

solely through community donations and small community grants. It is for this reason that new cribs are only available on a first-come-first-serve basis as funds are available. "Last year we hit a wall and ran out of funds around the holidays. We had a waiting list of more than 40 people and I'm sad to say that many of them were not able to receive a crib for Christmas. We're hoping this year will be different," said Hyman.

To meet demand, Cribs for Kids is holding a holiday fund drive. Patrons

can sponsor a new crib for a family for a \$50 tax deductible donation. In return they will receive an acknowledgement card and personal thank you note from a crib recipient they helped in the Durham community.

Durham Connects is a collaboration of the Durham Family Initiative, itself a partnership of the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University and the Center for Child and Family Health, and the Durham County Health Department. It is funded by The Duke Endowment. For more information, please visit www.durhamconnects.org or call (919) 668-3279.



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