

# Beating holiday stress for new parents

BY JEANNINE SATO

Durham Connects

The shopping, the cooking, the decorating — how can you do it all when you are have a new baby or are expecting a baby around the holidays? Welcoming a new baby and celebrating the holidays are considered joyful experiences, but both produce a lot of stress. In fact, they have a lot in common — new financial obligations, emotional demands, family pressures and a hectic pace. Put the two together and parents can quickly become overwhelmed. Durham Connects, the county's in-home nurse visiting program hopes to help new parents get through the holiday season with a little less stress. By meeting with parents in their own homes, parents of newborns have the benefit of one-on-one attention from a trained newborn nurse without the hustle and bustle of traffic, crowded offices and tired babies.

The mission of Durham Connects is to support new parents through community resources.

"With all the pressures for parents to do it all, it can be hard to make time for yourself, or even to meet with your home visit nurse," said Durham Connects nurse Jackie Parrish. "Durham Connects is a wonderful resource that can help find solutions to the everyday issues of being a new parent." The Durham Connects visit doesn't replace a visit to the baby's doctor, but instead offers an additional chance for parents to ask questions, discuss concerns and of course, get the baby's latest measurements.

Mom of three, Kellianne White gave birth to Rhys just before the holiday season, and even though she is an experienced mom, she appreciated the chance to sit down with a nurse to discuss how having another baby has changed her family's life — the joys and the difficulties.

"It was helpful know-



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New mom Kellianne White and her sons Quinn (right) and Rhys.

## TIPS FOR AVOIDING STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Ask for help — ask the neighbor to pick up a few things at the store, or ask a relative to help wrap gifts or go to the post office.
- Ask others to host gatherings this year.
- Shop online or delegate shopping to others.
- Allow yourself to purchase convenience foods for holiday meals instead of toiling in the kitchen. A spiral ham and a few homestyle sides go a long way.
- Scale back decorating.
- Nap when the baby naps.
- Lower expectations and be flexible.
- Be kind to yourself. Your baby benefits when you are at your best, so take that bath, take a walk, get a pedicure, ask your spouse or a friend to watch the baby while you read the paper. Do something good for yourself every day.

ing that there was an organization that cared and reached out [to me]. I felt very cared for," White said.

This season, White is prioritizing her plans and letting people know not to expect too much. "I tell family and friends that I'm going to do the best I can. If I can send a card, great, but we may not be there for all the parties, or not totally together with sending gifts on time. Most people understand and are willing to help if you just let them know in advance."

White, who lives with her husband Ty Roberts and three sons, Quinn, 6, Slade, 4, and Rhys, 4

months, says she will cut back on decorating and shopping this year and be flexible with herself. "If I don't get everything done, it's no big deal. The most important thing is to enjoy the holiday season and my family."

Durham Connects nurses hope to make the holiday season restful by offering assistance when it is needed most. The visit is made festive by the holiday themed children's book and gift bag the nurse brings along. Durham Connects nurses remind parents that the program is for everyone, even families with multiple children, or those who already have a lot of



help. The visit is free to parents of newborns and is considered a continuation of care by the areas birth hospitals.

"The Durham Connects nurse goes beyond a typical office visit. We are able to spend time talking about how the mother is doing physically and emotionally, how the new child has impacted finances, whether or not they have social support or how they're dealing with going back to work or finding child care. There are just so many things that change when a new baby enters the family and Durham Connects is an excellent resource to discuss these changes and find constructive solutions," said Parrish.

Durham Connects is launching in phases and currently covers half of the county's residents. To find out when Durham Connects is coming to your neighborhood, please visit [www.durhamconnects.org](http://www.durhamconnects.org) or call 919-68-3295 for more information.