

# HEALTHY LIVING

## Newborn home-visiting program a positive experience for most

BY JEANNINE SATO

Durham Connects

**S**herry Wei has her hands full. She spends most of her day-caring for 7-week-old William and his big brother, 20-month-old Qi. That's why when she was offered the opportunity to meet with a post-partum nurse in her home, Wei jumped at the chance. "Even though I was a second-time mom, I still had lots of questions," said Wei. Referring to her nurse by name, she continued, "Debbie gave me lots of encouragement and suggestions. She recommended activities and organizations I could attend for baby blues and other concerns. She gave me so many positive comments."

Wei's enthusiasm for the program is not uncommon. A new report shows that parents of babies who received a Durham Connects home visit viewed the experience as overwhelmingly positively. Durham Connects is a collaborative program of the Durham County Health Department, Duke University and area hospitals designed to support parents of newborns in Durham County. Of parents asked, 95 percent stated that the Durham Connects experience was helpful to them and their babies, and 97 percent said they would recommend the visit to others.

This word-of-mouth reputation is exactly

how Wei found out about Durham Connects. "I knew of the organization because several of my neighbors had visits and recommended it," said Wei. "So, when I was visited in the hospital, I scheduled the appointment. It's a pity (the program) didn't exist with my first (child)."

As the programs' name implies, the goal of Durham Connects is to help families identify their own needs and then community resources that can support parents in raising their infant. Nurses can connect families with several hundred resources in child care, financial services, parenting and health care. The hope is that these connections can help parents connect with their babies.

Wei moved to the Triangle from China when her husband was getting a graduate degree. He now has a full-time position in Durham and both of their children were born here. Like many new mothers, Wei has

no family in the area. It was for this reason, that the Durham Connects nurse connected Wei with The GrandParent Network of Durham. The program matches new parents with seniors for mentorship and parenting support. "I have an appointment with my GrandParent mentor and I'm very excited," said Wei.

Wei said she was also pleased with the timing of the visit. Durham Connects has spent the last year trying to get the window of opportunity for parents just right. Wei notes that because the baby's pediatric appointment is at 1 month and her post-partum check-up at six weeks, she was happy to have her Durham Connects nurse visit when the baby was just three weeks old. This gave her time to get to know the baby's habits and personality and just enough time to accumulate new questions for a health care provider.

Eighty-seven percent

### DURHAM CONNECTS NEWBORN HOME VISITING PROGRAM

To learn more: (919) 668-3279  
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### THE GRANDPARENT NETWORK OF DURHAM

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www.durhamconnects.org under Programs.



of mothers who received a Durham Connects visit felt the timing was "just right to be helpful." Ratings of the materials provided by the nurse, health checks and conversations also rated between 85 percent to 95 percent helpful by parents.

Of the information gathered, of particular importance was the fact that 80 percent of parents said they think the Durham community should provide financial support for the new program and make it available to all parents of newborns in Durham County. Currently, the program, which is offered to families regardless of income or status, is funded by a grant of The Duke Endowment. Once the program is running at full-scale, the goal is to maintain it through a combination of public and private funds.

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](http://www.durhamconnects.org) or call (919) 668-3279.