



# MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **KCHD presents local 'stars' of public health campaign** *Effort now includes East Tennessee babies*

*Knoxville, Tenn.* — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) revealed its 2017 Strong Baby campaign today, which features, for the first time, eight babies from East Tennessee. The educational campaign uses lighthearted and attention-grabbing images of stronger-than-average babies to educate the community about the importance of early and adequate prenatal care, breastfeeding, nutrition, safe sleep, avoiding tobacco, and other healthy behaviors that can help improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality.

“Strong, healthy families are the foundation of any thriving community, and I applaud our health department for localizing this fun and unique way to engage the community in this important issue,” said Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett.

The Strong Baby educational information is online at [StrongBabyKnox.org](http://StrongBabyKnox.org), and it will also be on billboards, in health care provider and partner offices, and at events. KCHD is encouraging the community to participate in the conversation by sharing their own stories, and the Strong Baby images and information on social media with the hashtag #StrongBabyKnox.

“We’re thrilled to partner with these exceptional families to promote maternal and child health in our community, and we hope these adorable babies inspire a broader conversation around this critical topic,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “Preventing injury and illness is central to our public health mission, and there’s no better way to improve community health than by starting at birth.”

KCHD launched its Strong Baby project in May 2016 using images of babies from a highly-successful campaign created by Serve Marketing and conducted by the City of Milwaukee Health Department. KCHD held a casting call in October 2016 in search of local ‘stars’ for its campaign. Announced last November, the selected babies are: Archie Green (20 months), Lariah Herod (19 months), Nathaniel Hoffman-McConchie (21 months), Lucia Marisol Mateo (15 months), Creighton Roman (25 months), Elleamoura Spangler (15 months), Teddy Spence (21 months) and Olivia Wong (20 months). The May 15 event revealed the images of the local ‘stars’ performing the incredible, physical feats for which the campaign is known.

While not all pregnancy complications can be prevented, women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and detecting problems early. Infant mortality, defined as the death of an infant before his or her first birthday, is higher for those born to mothers who receive inadequate prenatal care, and in 2013 only 70 percent of women in Knox County received early, adequate prenatal care. Babies born just a few weeks early have higher rates of hospitalization and illness versus full-term infants. In fact, complications of prematurity was the leading cause of infant death in 2014. It’s also important for families to continue healthy behaviors after pregnancy, including breastfeeding, avoiding tobacco, following the recommended

immunization schedule and providing safe sleep environments for their infants. Defined as suffocation, asphyxia, or entrapment related to bedding, toys or co-sleeping, sleep-related infant deaths in Tennessee increased by 43 percent between 2014 (99 deaths) and 2015 (142 deaths).

Improving the well-being of mothers, infants and children is an important community health goal for KCHD, as reflected in the organization's [Community Health Assessment](#). The Strong Baby project is an outcome of KCHD's Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) program, which is funded by a grant from the Tennessee Department of Health. FIMR is an action-oriented community process that continually assesses, monitors and works to improve service systems and community resources for women, infants and families.

**About Knox County Health Department:**

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

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*High-definition videos (approximately two minutes each) about the featured babies are available for your use on [Knox County's YouTube Channel](#). If you would like to receive B-roll from the event and/or a video interview with Dr. Buchanan, please contact KCHD Communications Specialist Daryl Hobby at [daryl.hobby@knoxcounty.org](mailto:daryl.hobby@knoxcounty.org).*

