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Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) Relaunches Strong Moms Campaign  
LIHF Uses Quilting Symbolism to Remind African American Moms They’re Covered by Strong Villages  

MILWAUKEE – In homage to World Prematurity Awareness Day, the University of Wisconsin – Madison LifeCourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) relaunched its Strong Moms are Covered by Strong Villages campaign. Black infants are more likely to be born preterm and with low birthweight than white infants, and Black mothers are under chronic stress that contributes to those birth outcomes three times as often as white mothers. This often sets up risk factors for mental illness. When LIHF held community conversations on this topic, the Strong Moms are Covered by Strong Villages campaign emerged. The campaign’s goal is to reduce the stigma of maternal depression among African American mothers, give voice to mothers who are suffering and empower the village of support to cover the mothers impacted.

“This idea came straight from the community who identified stress and racism as constant factors impacting their lives. At the beginning of the year, we shared that LIHF was moving from promises to action, and one of the promises we’re making good on is this Strong Moms campaign,” said Gina Green-Harris, Director of the UW Center for Community Engagement and Health Partnerships, which oversees LIHF among other programs. “We want to grow a movement that builds strong African American mothers and their families with awareness and support for depression that is healed through their villages. Ultimately, we envision African American mothers who are vibrant and living abundantly within a healthy supportive village.”

The first signs of the campaign can be found on the LIHF Program Office Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/LIHFProgramOffice/) and on the LIHF website (https://lihf.wisc.edu/), through testimonials from women from Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha. They have amazing stories of survival and perseverance that show the impact of Strong Moms are Covered by Strong Villages to date. Secondly, Facebook groups connected to the LIHF Program Office Facebook page are being established so that mothers can feel comfortable connecting with other mothers within their specific communities. Community conversations are also on the agenda. Finally, in the campaign, you will see quilts giving visual life to the movement, acknowledging how quilts have been represented in the African American community.

“Quilting has a long, rich heritage in the African American community and invokes a sense of covering and strength that are deeply entrenched in the African American experience,” said Green-Harris. “When our mothers, families and communities see these quilts, we want them to envision the village of support covering moms just as the quilts cover them.”

The first community event during the campaign, addressing Prematurity Awareness Month, will be LIHF’s webinar on Friday, November 20, from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Called, “Addressing Systemic Racism: The Toll of Infant Mortality and Prematurity on African American Families,” it features board certified physician, Dr. Jasmine Zapata, from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health; Dalvery Blackwell, executive director and co-founder of the African American Breastfeeding Network; Dr. Dominique Pritchett, a licensed mental health clinician from Beloved Wellness Center in Kenosha; and Preneice Love, LIHF’s community strategist in Racine. To register, visit https://bit.ly/2Iqo53a.

The LifeCourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) was developed to reduce infant mortality in Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha. LIHF is a strategic effort in partnership with the UW Population Health Institute. Both are funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP), a far-reaching commitment by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health to greatly improve the health of people in Wisconsin for years to come. LIHF addresses chronic stress in the experience, particularly in systems and services, of African American women. For more information, visit www.lihf.wisc.edu.