

## Greater Kentucky Chapter Programs 2006

### March of Dimes Expands NICU Family Support Project

The March of Dimes Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Family Support Project has been expanded to include Norton Suburban Hospital in Louisville.

This signature March of Dimes program provides information and comfort to families with sick or premature babies in the hospital, during the transition home, and in the event of a newborn death. It also contributes to NICU staff professional development and promotes a family-centered philosophy in NICUs.

The family support specialist, a former March of Dimes employee, will divide her time between an office at the hospital NICU and the March of Dimes chapter office.

### March of Dimes Awards \$200,000 Grant To University of Kentucky

In 2005, the Dept. of Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry at the University of Kentucky's College of Medicine received three-year a March of Dimes research grant to study "Membrane Fusion Promoted by the Human Metapneumovirus Fusion Protein." Dr. Rebecca Ellis Dutch is overseeing the project.

Human metapneumovirus (hMPV) was discovered in 2001 in infants and children experiencing acute respiratory disease. Its symptoms closely resemble those of respiratory syncytial virus. Subsequent analysis found that the virus has been present in adults worldwide since at least 1958.

The University of Kentucky research focuses on the first biochemical and functional analysis of the fusion protein of hMPV. This protein is critical for attachment of the virus to cells and entry into cells. Researchers will study the conditions needed for these processes and work to developed inhibitors.

**Kentucky Perinatal Association: Health Professional Education Program:**

In 2006 the Kentucky Perinatal Association published its Professional Education Program: HPEP (Health Professional Education Project), which was implemented with a \$25,000 grant from the March of Dimes. The program connects the March of Dimes, the State Department of Health, the Kentucky Folic Acid/Perinatal Partnership and the Kentucky Birth Surveillance Registry.

Physician presentations are recorded and through the project, more than 630 professionals have been educated about preterm birth and now can provide information to their clients. For more information, visit the HPEP Web site: <http://www.kentuckyperinatal.com/Education.html>.

**March of Dimes and the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership**

March of Dimes and the State Department of Health formed the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership in 2003 to educate Kentuckians that all women should consume 400 mcg of folic acid daily to prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine. The goal of the statewide folic acid campaign is to reduce by 50 percent the number of babies affected by spina bifida and anencephaly by the year 2010.

Between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2005, there have been a total of 1,227 activities that reached over 2,801,882 participants statewide. Also, since July 2000, local health departments have provided more than 372,384 women with folic acid supplementation and counseling/education.

In 2005 the partnership's focus expanded to include prematurity and the committee is designing a "tool kit" to share information about preterm birth.