

## Brown County offers its first Community Baby Shower

By Shirley Boardman

More than 35 different organizations and dozens of volunteers came together to offer the first Community Baby Shower for Brown County at the YMCA on September 21, 2024. A coalition, convened by Melissa Rittenhouse from Centerstone, has been working for almost a year to find ways to bring resources to our youngest community members and their families with hopes that no young mother, infant, toddler or their family members will lack for knowing that we are a community that cares.

Thirty-one households attended and approximately 70 children were reached through this effort. Funding for the event was provided by the Brown County Community Foundation, Prevent Child Abuse-Indiana, St. Vincent de Paul, Indiana Criminal Justice Initiative, IU Health, and every vendor and many individuals offered gift items. John Aumage, St. Vincent de Paul, has served as the financial representative for the Coalition. Mother's Cupboard and The Pentecostals set up a refreshment station and Jason Heffner, his son, Deacon, and Randy Blackburn were the first faces to greet guests as they came through the door. The last faces at the exit station were St. Agnes representatives, Leigha Chadwell (also representing Cummins), Adrienne and Ella Spahr, and Maddie McCarthy who helped guests select gifts, complete an exit survey and offered an extra hand getting items to their vehicle.

The room was filled with joy and laughter. Community partners took time to meet and greet. Adorable babies and pregnant moms reminded us of why it is important to support and celebrate this segment of our population. Grandparents and family members wrangled energetic toddlers.

A safe sleep class was offered by Beth Lucas from Women, Infants & Children (WIC). IU Health, represented by Susi French, and Indiana Criminal Justice Institute and Child Passenger Safety Technicians checked car seat installations and helped parents insure that car seats were properly installed and appropriate for the child. A generous supply of car seats were available in the event the family required one.

We will be working on next steps to include reaching households that registered but missed the event as well as promoting the resources in our community whose mission it is to support this population. Clarity Pregnancy Services and Alyssa Hefner are among those who stand ready to continue to stay in touch, offer resources, along with WIC, Healthy Families, Nurse Family Partnership, Dolly Parton Imagination Library and Brown County Public Library to name just a few.

A more detailed report listing all the community partners and information will be posted on the St. Vincent de Paul website in the near future. In the meantime, enjoy a sampling of photos. We are so grateful that we are a community that cares.

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