



# PROJECT NAF

*Nurturing Asheville & Area Families*



**“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” ~ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

## PROJECT NAF

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## January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

About one in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect. Not all birth defects can be prevented, but a woman can take steps to increase her chance of having a healthy baby.

- Make a PACT, a commitment to yourself, to get healthy before and during pregnancy.
- See a healthcare professional regularly.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and street drugs.
- Prevent infections.

### Choose a Healthy Lifestyle

- Poor control of diabetes during pregnancy increases the chances for birth defects.



- Strive to reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about any medications you are taking.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations (shots).

### Get Enough Folic Acid

Each day, take a vitamin that has folic acid in it, or take a supplement that has only folic acid in it. Eat a bowl of breakfast cereal that has 100% of the daily value of folic acid everyday.

Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

## Why is Preconception Health Important?

There are approximately 1.7 million women of childbearing age in North Carolina. They are our mothers, our sisters, our aunts, our friends, and our neighbors. They work in our schools, our offices, our factories, our hospitals, our restaurants, and our homes.

The health of these women is inextricably linked to the health of their babies and can have an impact on the health of their families as well.

### Chronic Conditions

Over half of infant deaths in North Carolina can be attributed to medical issues of the mother, many of which existed before pregnancy.

Despite their relatively young age, many North Carolina women of childbearing age already suffer from chronic conditions that affect their overall health. More than half (58%) of the women in this age group are overweight or obese. Approximately 16 percent have been diagnosed with hypertension, nearly 10 percent report having asthma, and 6 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes.

All of these health conditions are associated with a greater likelihood of pregnancy-related risks for both the mother and the child.

Source: NC Department of Health & Human Services

## January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

No woman should die of cervical cancer! The most important thing you can do to help prevent cervical cancer is to get screened regularly, beginning at age 21.

Cervical cancer is highly preventable with regular screening tests and appropriate follow-up care. It also can be cured when found early and treated.

Cervical cancer is almost always caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). Vaccines are available to protect against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical cancer.

### Screening Tests

Two tests can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early:



The Pap test (or Pap smear) looks for precancers, which are cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.

The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes.

Source: CDC



Belinda K. Grant, Executive Director of Mount Zion Community Development, Inc.  
Photo: Urban News



### Minority Infant Mortality Affects Us All Directly or Indirectly!

Every baby deserves to see a healthy first year of life and beyond!

The overarching goal of Project NAF is to contribute to the reduction of infant mortality and low birthweight births for African American women and their infants in Buncombe County, NC.

Project NAF has developed specific goals, objectives, and activities to attain the larger goal of improving birth outcomes among Buncombe County African Americans.

Project NAF is designed to address the gaps in participant's knowledge, and assist participants in building skills and changing behavior to implement attained information and knowledge. Goals and objectives for Project NAF are developed with input from community partners, current and former project participants, and Project NAF's Community Advisory Board.

## Message from Shari L. Smith

### January: National Folic Acid Awareness Week



Shari L. Smith

Folic acid is a B vitamin. If a woman has enough folic acid in her body before pregnancy, it can help prevent major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. Women need 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.

For folic acid to help prevent major birth defects, a woman needs to start taking it at least one month before she becomes pregnant and while she is pregnant.

However, every woman needs folic acid every day, whether she's planning to get pregnant or not, for the healthy new cells the body makes daily.

Think about the skin, hair, and nails. These, and other parts of the body, make new cells each day.