



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **March of Dimes Awards \$20,000 Grant to Harrisonburg Community Health Center to Improve Pregnancy Health Outcomes Through New Centering Pregnancy Program**

(Harrisonburg, VA – November 1, 2018) –March of Dimes Community Grants Program has awarded a \$20,000 grant to Harrisonburg Community Health Center (HCHC) to implement a new centering pregnancy program to improve pregnancy outcomes of women served at the Center.

This grant is one of several which March of Dimes awards in pursuit of its mission to lead the fight to improve the health of all moms and babies. It is made possible through a partnership with Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation which has provided almost \$80,000 in funding this year to support the expansion of CenteringPregnancy® in Virginia.

CenteringPregnancy®, developed by Centering Healthcare Institute, has been demonstrated to reduce the incidence of preterm birth and low birth weight infants through education and support. The program empowers women with self-care and self-confidence as they take an active role in their pregnancy, and women participating receive more time with their healthcare provider during their pregnancy than those in traditional prenatal visits. Additionally, CenteringPregnancy® offers emotional support benefits through the unique community building aspect of its design. The program integrates the three major components of care: health assessment, education, and support, into a unified program within a group setting. Six to 12 women with similar gestational ages meet together, learn care skills, participate in a facilitated discussion, and develop a support network with other group members. Each group meets for a total of ten 2-hour sessions throughout pregnancy and early postpartum. The practitioner completes standard physical health assessments at each group session and acts as a facilitator to teach, listen, and encourage women through their pregnancies.

“CenteringPregnancy® Group Prenatal Care is widely regarded as the best way to deliver prenatal care for many patient populations, particularly those at-risk,” stated HCHC’s Director of Women’s Health Services Ann Schaeffer, DNP, CNM. “The enhanced education, preparation, and unique community-building that CenteringPregnancy® offers is fulfilling to both the patient and the practitioner. As groups work together on the journey of pregnancy, they honor the knowledge that pregnant women already have and support one another on what is yet to be learned or experienced. This builds confidence and increased self-care, which ultimately produces healthier outcomes for mothers and babies.”

HCHC anticipates that in addition to community bonds that a centering pregnancy program will provide, additional benefits will be seen including: increase in first trimester visits, depression care throughout pregnancy and postpartum, reduction of low birth weight infants, and an increase in complete postpartum

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care, including contraceptive planning. “It simply offers women better care throughout their pregnancy,” said Schaeffer.

HCHC’s grant from March of Dimes runs through June 2019, allowing ample time for HCHC staff to implement the program and market it to its patients. HCHC anticipates that the first group will meet in December of 2018.

“We know from experience that group prenatal care reduces the risk for preterm birth by 33% when compared to traditional care,” says Marie Pokraka, March of Dimes Virginia Maternal Child Health Director. “March of Dimes applauds Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield for its dedication and continued support of our mission to lead the fight to improve the health of all moms and babies.”

### **About March of Dimes**

March of Dimes leads the fight for the health of all moms and babies. We support research, lead programs and provide education and advocacy so that every family can have the best possible start. Building on a successful 80-year legacy of impact and innovation, we stand up for every mom and every baby. Visit [marchofdimes.org](http://marchofdimes.org) or [nacersano.org](http://nacersano.org) for more information. Visit [shareyourstory.org](http://shareyourstory.org) for comfort and support. Find us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **About Harrisonburg Community Health Center’s (HCHC)**

Founded in 2007, the Harrisonburg Community Health Center’s (HCHC) mission is to provide quality, affordable healthcare to our diverse community. As a nonprofit health care organization, HCHC seeks to ensure that affordable, high quality primary health care services are made available to all residents of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, including family medicine, pediatrics, behavioral health, women’s health, dental services, and HIV/AIDS care management. HCHC provides care at three locations in the Valley: the Main Clinic on Little Sorrell Drive in Harrisonburg; the clinic at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community in Harrisonburg; and the HCHC clinic in Elkton. With donor support and as a federally qualified health center (FQHC), HCHC makes health care possible for a wide range of individuals and families that would not otherwise have access to quality medical care. HCHC strives to be a “medical home” for its patients so that health and well-being are a priority in our community. HCHC accepts most major insurances and offers discounts to its patients based on household income. All are welcome to choose HCHC as their medical home! For complete information log on to [www.hburgqchc.org](http://www.hburgqchc.org).

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