

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., R.S.  
Interim Commissioner  
1001 E. Fayette Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Schleiter***

***PHONE: 443-984-2623***

***[Mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov)***

**Mayor Dixon Commemorates National Infant Mortality Awareness Month**

**BALTIMORE, MD** (September 26, 2009) – Today, Mayor Sheila Dixon commemorated National Infant Mortality Awareness Month by speaking about the importance of improving birth outcomes, reducing teen pregnancy and giving children a healthy start at the Be Fit Family Festival and Rally in Clifton Park.

The event is co-sponsored by Legg Mason, the Baltimore City Health Department, Jewel House Incorporated, Baltimore City Healthy Start, and the Mayor’s Be Fit Baltimore Campaign.

In 2008, 615 babies died in Maryland. Of these, 118 died in Baltimore City, an increase of 5 percent from the previous year. Most of these babies were African American, reflecting a serious health disparity.

“This is a public health crisis that must be addressed now,” Mayor Dixon said. “A single infant death is one too many. To lose 118 babies in their first year is unacceptable. These are preventable deaths. Our communities are strong and can help ensure that babies are born healthy and stay healthy.”

In April, Mayor Dixon announced a multi-year plan to improve birth outcomes in the city. CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield has committed \$3 million over three years to fund the program.

“Our hope is people who attended today’s event will leave with a better understanding of the issues and risk factors associated with poor birth outcomes and act in healthier ways,” said Interim Commissioner Farrow.

“Engaging families in the struggle to reduce infant deaths is critical, because healthy, thriving families, taking charge of their health and wellbeing, mean a healthy start for our babies,” said Alma Roberts, president and CEO of Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc.

More than 30 vendors at the event offered helpful resources and various activities – including a Family Walk-A-Thon, free counseling services for financial assistance and a variety of health screenings and referrals.

“If one member of a family is not fit in mind, body or otherwise, the entire family suffers,” said Marlene A. Johnson, CEO Jewel House, Incorporated. “The information participants learned

today should be shared with others to ensure that everyone in their family and community lives a healthy and fit lifestyle.”

For more information about the Mayor’s Birth Outcomes Plan, visit [www.baltimorehealth.org](http://www.baltimorehealth.org).

###