

# Fragile Times



## BABY MARIO

*During her pregnancy, Mario's mother*

was on a methadone maintenance program to help her abstain from using illicit drugs. Aware of this, the hospital where Mario was born started him on morphine immediately after his birth to ease his withdrawal symptoms from the drugs he had been exposed to in utero. Within two weeks, he was weaned off of the morphine and sent home. His mother was encouraged to continue to breast feed as it "would further help with Mario's withdrawal."

Mario was a darling little bundle with dark curly hair and big round eyes. Though a little underweight, he was an easy baby; content and sleeping well. But, after two weeks at home, Mario's mother's breast milk dried up and within hours Mario started exhibiting what the family perceived as seizures.

Mario was rushed to a hospital emergency room in Seattle. He was tremulous, frantic and irritable. The medical team immediately recognized the symptoms of drug withdrawal, which was confirmed by a urine analysis showing methadone in his system. He was placed on a fairly high dose of morphine to calm and ease his discomfort. PICC was contacted and asked to continue the management of his withdrawal process.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that the small amount of methadone that is passed through the breast milk is not harmful and will have no adverse affect on a baby. At PICC, that has not been our experience and, obviously, not the medical community's- as they continue to encourage mothers to breast feed to help a baby that is in withdrawal. Mario's lab results were additional proof that drugs pass to a baby through breast milk.

At PICC, Mario's withdrawal was further complicated by his mother's use of psychotropic drugs that she had been prescribed for mental health concerns. That exposure was causing Mario to have stimulus issues and making him very difficult to feed. Even the sensation of swallowing formula was causing him to fight the bottle. Though it was challenging to get him to take enough formula for healthy growth and weight gain, it still was far better than what would have been the easier route of using a nasal gastric feeding tube. Learning to eat and accepting the nipple would only benefit him over time.



*Continued- Page 2*

P E D I A T R I C I N T E R I M C A R E C E N T E R

*Hugs  
can do  
great  
amounts  
of good-  
especially  
for  
children.*

*-Princess  
Diana*

SAVE THE DATE!

*"Building the Future" Luncheon*

*Sponsored by the Board of Directors, the "Building the Future" Luncheon is PICC's major annual fund-raising event. The 2008 luncheon will be Friday, May 16, in the Ballroom of the Southcenter DoubleTree Guest Suites. We are already looking for sponsors, table captains, volunteers – and, of course, enthusiastic guests! Please call 253-852-5253 or e-mail Elaine at [elainep@picc.net](mailto:elainep@picc.net) for more information.*

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF PLACEMENT

One question we frequently get asked is where the babies go after they leave PICC and who makes the placement decision. The process is best understood if we begin just after the baby is born. Once the newborn is identified as having drug exposure, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must be contacted. This is usually done by the hospital where the baby was born. A state case worker is assigned with, as his clients, both the mother and the baby. If it is determined that the baby will need support and care during drug withdrawal, the state case worker decides if he is to come to PICC. During the baby's stay at PICC, the case worker begins to research and investigate if the mother or father are a feasible option for placement. This involves evaluating each parent for their ability to properly care for the child. They look at many factors which could affect the baby's health and safety. Such factors may include if either of the parents are still using



### BABY MARIO *(Continued from page 1)*

Mario was with us for 43 days. During that time, Dad, who had been awarded custody, visited regularly, gaining the skills necessary to care for him. Under PICC's care, Mario thrived and is now home and doing fine.

*Are we saying that breast feeding is not best? Absolutely not! Breast feeding is best -- if the breast milk is not tainted by substances which could be harmful to the baby. As long as a mother takes drugs while continuing to breast feed -- her baby is also taking drugs. Mario's withdrawal from breast milk is proof of that. He isn't our first baby who has experienced this and, sadly, won't be our last. As long as there are conflicting beliefs and mothers are lead to believe that breast feeding is best in all circumstances, this will be an issue of on-going concern.*

do they have a home to take the baby to and are they capable of providing for the child. If the case worker finds neither parent is a viable option, he will then look to extended family members who would be willing to welcome the child into their home. Again, studying each family member, always keeping the best interests of the child in mind.

We agree with the Washington State Legislative directive that states that the "primary focus should be the reunification of the biological family", if it is a safe and nurturing environment. Even though the child might not ever live with his parents, with extended family he will know where he came from and what his roots are. He will always understand where he got his looks, his talents and his quirks. Sadly though, many times family placement isn't what is best for the child, then foster care must be considered.

At PICC, we welcome the parents during their baby's stay. We know they feel comfortable here and, quite possibly, a reason for this is in knowing we are not standing in judgement of them. They know we don't make the decision if they take their baby home or they walk out alone.

## BARBARA DRENNEN HONORED

In August, Barbara Drennen, Executive Director and co-founder of the Pediatric Interim Care Center, The Newborn Nursery, received a very special award from the nonprofit organization, "Strategies for Youth". Founded by Washington State Lt. Governor Brad Owen, the program addresses issues that affect elementary and middle school students. Barbara was honored for her lifelong commitment to children and to drug exposed newborns.



Mannington, a leading manufacturer of fine flooring, annually recognizes women who make a difference in the lives of people and communities in America and around the globe with their "Stand on a Better World" award. This year Barb was awarded the local honor. Congratulations!

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

In our last newsletter, I mentioned that we were asking the Legislature to allow us to care for more infants. In June, we were given the good news that we would be funded for 17 babies, which, for the last 15 years, had been limited to 13. We are extremely appreciative for the increase and grateful that we will be able to assist more little ones as they suffer the effects of prenatal drug abuse.

This year we have seen an increase in newborns exposed to methamphetamines and cocaine. Our greatest challenge with this population is feeding difficulties that cause them to be both unable and unwilling to nipple their feeds. Babies with opiate exposure continue to be a very significant percentage of the population at the center. They require morphine to safely assist them through the withdrawal process and special handling techniques due to increased sensitivities. We have also seen an increase in babies whose drug exposure continued after birth by mothers breast feeding. (see Baby Mario story, pg. 1)

As busy as the past year has been, our numbers are down slightly due to a respiratory virus that invaded the nursery in February. Called RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), it is highly contagious and eventually effected every baby at PICC. One by one, each newborn had to be discharged or sent to Children's Hospital in Seattle until they were stable. PICC's nursery had to be completely disinfected from top to bottom before any new babies could be admitted.

Here at PICC, our rewards are many. One of my most heartwarming continues to be meeting our "graduates"

when they return for visits throughout the year. Many were here ten to fifteen years ago and, knowing that we played a significant part in their lives, is a memory we cherish. Seeing that they are doing well can burst your heart.

I want to thank all of the wonderful people throughout the state that share our passion and care so much about the babies at PICC. I thank you for giving of yourselves so freely and helping us provide a safe home for all of them.

### BUY YOUR BABY GIFTS FROM PICC!



How's this for a win-win proposition? Now you can buy sure-to-please baby gifts, get a great price and support PICC's babies - all at the same time! We are now selling custom-made baby layette gift baskets on our new shopping page. These are the same beautiful gift baskets popularized at PICC's annual luncheon, now available year 'round. All proceeds from the sales will be used to support PICC's Infant Withdrawal Program. You can also go to our shopping page to buy bricks in our new building; training DVD's "Caring for Drug-Exposed Infants; PICC sweatshirts and other items.

Check out our new website: [www.picc.net](http://www.picc.net)

Yes, I would like to support the Pediatric Interim Care Center, The Newborn Nursery

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my donation in the amount of:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed

Please charge my credit card:

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*Donations are tax deductible within the guidelines of the law. Please check with your financial advisor.*

PEDIATRIC INTERIM  
CARE CENTER

328 4th Avenue South  
Kent, WA 98032

To:

*Your children will see  
what you're all about  
by what you live  
rather than  
what you say.*

*-Wayne Dyer*

## *Thank You!*

It is our pleasure to share with you where some of our support came from over the summer. We are honored to have such friends and hope you will join us in recognizing them. Thanks to **Newberry Realty, Inc.** for donating the proceeds from their recent Golf Tournament and to the crew in Contractor Services at **Home Depot** on Kent's East Hill for holding a fund raiser for us. In July, the babies received a very generous gift from **Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear**



**Hugs Foundation.** Also in July, **Puget Sound Energy** honored us with a grant for PICC's Infant Withdrawal Program. Both the **Puyallup** and **Tulalip Tribes** gave generously as did **Mr. Ron Crockett** and **Drs. Joseph and Cathy Jo Linn.** We received wonderful gifts from the **Schiff Foundation, Mt. Rainier High School** in Des Moines, **Keller-Williams Realty** and **Sunrise Elementary** in Kent. Other special donations came from the **Greater Tacoma Community Foundation; Wal-Mart; Taco Time; The Giving Circle; Alticor** and **Mike Maletich.** *To these and all of the many others, we can never begin to express our appreciation. Thank you for giving to the babies at PICC.*

### SERVICES

Providing immediate, short-term medical care for medically fragile infants suffering from prenatal drug exposure, in addition to providing educational and support services to the community in the recognition and management of substance abused children.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Barbara J. Drennen

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### FRAGILE TIMES

This newsletter is published as a community service by Pediatric Interim Care Center (PICC).

Its contents are intended to be informative and offer insight into the problems facing many of our children born today.