

Organization: The Arc of Mecklenburg

County: Mecklenburg**Address:** 4108 Park Rd., Ste. 409
Charlotte, N.C. 28209**Phone:** 704-332-4535**Website:** <http://www.arcmeck.org/>**Project:** Educational Resources*****Below are excerpts from their final report*****

About the Project: We were able to purchase four replica infants (one healthy baby, one FASD baby, one drug-affected baby, and one shaken baby). These replicas are strong visual aids used to educate women of childbearing age about the long-term and potentially life threatening dangers of making poor choices as it pertains to their health and the health of their child. The replica dolls demonstrate the differences in appearance, weight, and even behavior with interactive features. Each replica infant was accompanied by a strong curriculum that can be incorporated into our program. Additional funds were used to purchase speakers and a DVD player to be used in our workshops, trainings, and presentations for a stronger impact and better ability to provide additional information or personal accounts to participants.

We have already held one training with the items purchased. There were 22 people in attendance. The replica infants were used to demonstrate the vast difference in weight and physical appearance of infants who were exposed to alcohol during the pregnancy. Participants were able to get a better idea of the real effects of drinking while pregnant. Many were surprised by the difference in weight and physical abnormalities that characterize an infant with FASD.

We are able to reach over 200 women through our presentations and around 750,000 through our awareness campaign. The educational materials purchased through this grant will be used to reinforce our message and simulate the realities of the situation. We are excited to continue our work with these new tools.

Successes: This program educated participants about the harmful effects and long-term damage their choices could have, while reinforcing the information through visual and physical demonstrations. The ideas about alcohol, drug-use, and stress that are discussed become real when participants hear the cries and feel the tremors (i.e. holding the drug-affected replica infant or shake the shaking baby and watch the lights turn on as different parts of the brain gets damaged). These presentations make their decisions very real and teach them that their choices can and will have an impact on not only their health but the health of their child. The personal stories that are shared are examples of real life situations and communicate that these problems (alcoholism, drug-use, and stress) affect women of every ethnicity, social class, and geographic region. Our efforts work to educate a wide range of women of childbearing age to increase awareness and understanding for better health outcomes for the mother



and child. Participants show an increased understanding of these health concerns and interest in taking a proactive approach in making healthier lifestyle choices.

We greatly appreciate the support from your Foundation in helping us to have the tools to truly make a difference through our efforts to encourage mothers to make healthy lifestyle choices for themselves and their child. Now participants are able to reinforce what we teach with visual and physical demonstrations, which make the experience more enriching and meaningful. Being able to engage participants in these activities provides them with concrete evidence that their choices have very real implications. It triggers the light bulb realization that these are real dangers that can have life-long effects.