



Paige Beauchemin and Sarah Homitsky, M.D. from WBH thank you for helping mothers and their babies.

Singing, Reading & Rhyming

You help the littlest of learners! Your kindness helps nurture the mom-newborn bond while supporting early literacy activities.

The room itself isn't much to look at. The overhead fluorescent lights, the cool-green color palette and the comfortable but-not-too-comfortable chairs are pretty standard fare for most hospitals.

But, today, thanks to you, this space is special. It's where seven moms and their newborn babies, two therapists and one librarian come together to participate in a group therapy session. It's part of the wide range of services provided by the Women's Behavioral Health (WBH) Intensive Outpatient Program for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders at Allegheny Health Network.

The statistics regarding perinatal depression are hard to ignore. According to Sarah Homitsky, M.D., medical director for the Women's Perinatal

Psychiatry Program, the illness affects 15 to 20 percent of pregnant women and new moms—regardless of their age, socio-economic status or support system.

You may think the librarian is the odd person out at this kind of therapy session, but Bonny Yeager will tell you she's right where she belongs. "Learning begins at birth, and the first and earliest years of brain development are critical." But, equally important, she's helping to develop the mother-infant bond that can sometimes be a challenge for women with perinatal depression.

One day last spring, Paige Beauchemin, a nurse working with the WBH unit, ran into CLP – Lawrenceville looking for books for her

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Because of your support, community outreach programs like *Baby and Me* storytime are making a real difference in the lives of new mothers and their babies.

kids. There, she met Bonny. It didn't take long for the two women to realize they shared a powerful connection. At WBH, Paige says, "We're always looking for activities that foster the bond between mothers and their infants." Encouraging early literacy is a fundamental component of the Library's mission and a partnership was born.

Bonny has become a twice-a-month regular at the WBH group sessions hosting a *Baby and Me*

storytime. Although there are plenty of studies to support the essential role reading plays in a baby's development, Bonny isn't there to cite statistics. Instead, she talks about the Library's resources for caregivers and gently encourages the moms to read and sing along with her to their babies.

Symptoms of perinatal depression include heightened anxiety and anger, as well as a sense of detachment. That's why the simple act of singing can be so meaningful. "Seeing your baby smile at the sound of your voice, make eye contact with you or calm down with your touch can help foster that mother-infant relationship," Dr. Homitsky says.

Thank you

Sometimes a nursery rhyme can feel like an anthem. Thank you for supporting community outreach programs that help mothers bond with their newborns through songs, rhymes and stories.

Please remember the Library in your Will or estate plans. A bequest could be the most impactful gift you ever make.

To learn more, contact Renée Pekor at 412.622.6276 or pekorr@carnegielibrary.org.



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