

First Lady launches Illinois Family Connects

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PEORIA – First Lady Diana Rauner today celebrated the launch of the Illinois Family Connects pilot program, a universal newborn support system. It is a home visiting

program administered by the Children's Home Association of Illinois in cooperation with OSF Healthcare Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria and is available to Peoria County families who deliver a baby at OSF.

The First Lady was joined by Jim Dimas, secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services, as well as representatives of the Illinois State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. "I am honored to be here today to talk about one of my passions, home visiting," First Lady Diana Rauner said. "I have seen firsthand that all families need help and support when they bring home a new baby, and this program can help every child thrive."



The Illinois Family Connects program is a community-based, universal program with an additional pilot program in Illinois. The First Lady was in Stephenson County on May 1 to celebrate the launch of its program. That project has been up and running for a few months and reports that almost 100 home visits have been conducted.

Every Peoria County family who delivers a baby at OSF Healthcare Saint Francis Medical Center will be offered community-wide support at no cost that will begin with a community nurse meeting with the family in the hospital and at home after birth. Other

support includes wellness checks for the baby and family and help identifying and connecting with supportive resources from which any new family may benefit.



“We are honored to collaborate in such a way that support is offered to Peoria County families to make them and our community stronger,” said Matt George, CEO of the Children’s Home.

The pilot program is a product of the Illinois Home Visiting Task Force, which Diana Rauner has co-chaired since 2009 and is a public-private partnership funded through federal and state grants. The Illinois Family Connects program was originally developed in Durham, N.C. This program makes Illinois a national model for supporting all families from cradle to career.

