

# Showcase

## Back to sleep Kiwanis onesies remind new parents of their babies' safest sleeping position

Five years ago, John Crupi of the Marshalltown, Iowa, Kiwanis Club served on a Child Abuse Prevention Services committee, which wanted to educate families of newborns on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The plan was to distribute one-piece baby outfits—called onesies—printed with “This Side Up” on the front.

SIDS is a major cause of death to babies from 1 month to 1 year of age, says Linda Havelka, associate director of Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS). Having a baby sleep on his or her back is one way to reduce that risk.

Crupi saw the project as a great opportunity for his Kiwanis club to do something good for the community and its children. The shirt's message, he explains, reminds parents about the dangers of putting their babies down on their stomachs.

“That’s how they put babies to sleep 15 to 20 years ago,” he says.

To create the onesies, Kiwanis and CAPS merged their resources. The club buys the onesies and has them silkscreened in Spanish and English with “Kiwanis Cares About Me” on the back. Then a CAPS child-development specialist visits the family of a new baby, gives them the onesie and explains ways to reduce the risk of SIDS.

The program reached about 400 families this past year.

Some new moms had never heard of SIDS. Once Jimena Acripino learned about it, she couldn't wait to tell others. “I asked (my aunt) if she knew she should put her baby to sleep on her back, and she didn't



Olivia's ready for a nap in her Kiwanis onesie. Instructions on the front of the shirt remind her mother, Melissa Houchuli, to lay her down “This Side Up.”

### SIDS prevention

Here's advice to keep in mind when starting a SIDS-prevention program:

#### Find a partner

Agency representatives have the expertise to help your club establish a well-rounded program.

#### Commit to education

Families must be educated on ways to reduce the risk of SIDS, not simply given the onesie without explanation.

#### Support local businesses

The Marshalltown Kiwanis Club uses a local silkscreen printer to create its onesies.

#### Use the media

This project and issue naturally attract media: newspaper, radio and TV.

#### Spread the word

Parents, grandparents, babysitters and other adults who take care of infants all need to know the dangers of SIDS.

know that. So I talked to her about why she should.”

Because Crupi regularly sends pictures and project summaries to the local newspaper, the word is out

about SIDS. He says people now stop him on the street and say, “I never knew you had to put children on their backs.”

—*Pamela Ackerman*