

## CommunityFocus

### On the Upside

More than 15,000 'This Side Up' onesies will be distributed to new parents in Central Virginia.



Baby Mackenzie Coleman sports one of the Spanish-language onesies.

[Andy Thompson](#)Richmond.comMonday, May 21, 2007If **Kyra Oliver Hitzeman** dreams big, perhaps it's because her son never got a chance to dream at all.

**Hayes Hitzeman** was four-and-a-half months old almost five years ago when a babysitter called in a panic because Hayes had stopped breathing. Hayes never woke up, a victim of **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)**. Four days later, Oliver Hitzeman and her husband **Ezra Hitzeman** started the **Hayes Hitzeman Foundation** in their son's honor with the goal of educating new parents and raising awareness of SIDS.

Yesterday at the Ukrop's supermarket on Forest Hill Avenue the foundation launched a partnership that Oliver Hitzeman hopes will be a big step toward accomplishing that mission. Together with **Ukrop's Super Markets**, **Ukrop's Dress Express** and **Smart Beginnings** – an initiative launched by Virginia Governor Tim Kaine last May – the foundation's "**This Side Up**" campaign will distribute more than 15,000 onesies through the governor's new-parent kits. The onesies will be available in both English and Spanish.

"This is a huge step in creating a future in which no parent loses their baby to SIDS," Oliver Hitzeman said to a group that included local media and state Secretary of Health and Human Services **Marilyn Tavenner**, as well as a number of mothers with newborns modeling the onesies. "While newborns in Central Virginia will be the first to receive 'This Side Up' onesies...I want to take it nationally."

More than 2,100 families in the United States lose a baby to SIDS every year. The "This Side Up" campaign tries to educate parents and anyone that looks after an infant that babies are at less risk for SIDS if placed on their back for nap or bed time.

The onesies feature a logo and the phrase "This Side Up" on the front. The back has additional tips that may reduce the risk of SIDS: giving the baby a pacifier at nap or bed time, breastfeeding, keeping the baby out of an adult's bed, making sure the infant sleeps on a firm mattress and not smoking around the baby.

Previous efforts by the foundation have gotten VCU Health Systems, CJW Medical

Center and Bon Secours Richmond Health Systems on board distributing "This Side Up" t-shirts to new families.

The governor's new-parent kit goes out to all new parents in the state. It's a resource that features information about healthy development, parenting and available services and resources to assist parents in raising their child.

"Our goal with this initiative is to share information and efforts to make the most of the early years for Virginia's young children," Tavenner said. "The 'This Side Up' campaign strives to make a baby's first months safer and fits perfectly with the Smart Beginnings mission."

Tavenner said that about 100,000 children are born in the state every year. And with not enough onesies to go around currently, the campaign is focused locally.

"We'll try to get it across the entire state of Virginia," Oliver Hitzeman said. "We've got Central Virginia covered. And Ukrop's has said they want to continue to be our partners. And then hopefully in a few years I'll be telling you about our national campaign."

In past five years, before starting the focus on "This Side Up," the Hayes Hitzeman foundation raised \$350,000 for SIDS research through an annual silent auction at the [Science Museum of Virginia](#), a golf tournament and other events. Ukrop's and Pampers helped the foundation fund the production of the onesies. And Ukrop's Dress Express produced the infant clothing.

For now, Oliver Hitzeman said, the only thing keeping the all-volunteer campaign from growing even more quickly is increased funding. To that end, she has sought out a celebrity sponsor as well as put the onesie up for sale on the organization's Website ([www.thissideupcampaign.org](http://www.thissideupcampaign.org) or [www.hayesfoundation.org](http://www.hayesfoundation.org)).

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