

Annamarie Saarinen Receives Renowned Betty Hubbard Award For Leadership in Maternal and Child Health

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Annamarie and Ed Ehlinger with Commissioner Ed Ehlinger

St. Paul, MN (BPN) 12/11/12 — Annamarie Saarinen, co-founder of the Newborn Coalition | Newborn Foundation, as well as the "One in 100" organization (100.org) for awareness of congenital heart diseases (CHD) in children, has received the annual Betty Hubbard Maternal and Child Health Leadership Award from the Minnesota Department of Health.

The award, which recognizes leadership and achievements in health for mothers and children, was presented by Minnesota's Commissioner of Health, Ed Ehlinger, MD, at the Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force meeting on December 7th in Saint Paul.

"Annamarie Saarinen has made exceptional contributions to the health of Minnesota's mothers and children," Commissioner of Health Dr. Ed Ehlinger said. "Her dedication has contributed greatly to Minnesota's reputation as a national leader in the advancement of maternal and child health."

The awards are presented in two categories – for accomplishments of statewide significance and for achievements at the community level. Saarinen received the statewide award for her work to implement and advance newborn heart screening.

Saarinen is the lead instigator and policy liaison for the Newborn Heart Screening Project, a Minnesota-based pilot that brought the Minnesota Department of Health together with the state's largest health systems to develop protocols and standards for the implementation of newborn CCHD screening. The program has since been used as a model for states around the nation and in several countries internationally.

In August 2012, Minnesota's Newborn Screening Advisory Committee added CCHD to the state's routine newborn screening panel. Since 2010, Saarinen and the Newborn Coalition have worked at the public policy level in assisting more than a dozen additional states in drafting legislative and statutory language to implement newborn CCHD screening.

Presenting the award, Commissioner Ehlinger described Saarinen as "among the most diligent and accomplished healthcare advocates – tireless, passionate and dedicated to the mission of assuring all newborns have an improved chance at a healthy life."

In 2011, the Saarinen and the Newborn Coalition were instrumental in securing a federal recommendation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that all newborns be screened for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD). Heart defects are the most common of all birth defects, impacting 1 of every 100 infants. The Newborn Foundation is also working internationally to support the introduction of newborn heart screening, expand existing public health programs for early detection of diseases and disorders in babies, and work with health officials to establish electronically enabled health systems to support improved access and care.

About the Newborn Foundation | Newborn Coalition

The Newborn Coalition (www.newborncoalition.org) and Newborn Foundation (www.newbornfoundation.org) leverage health IT, medical and biotechnology innovation to improve outcomes and reduce disparities for the newest, most vulnerable citizens. Co-founded by the mother of a baby diagnosed at 48 hours old with congenital heart disease, the organizations have a national footprint that supports increased understanding of newborn health issues and risk factors while helping improve access to quality care and resources through vital research and pilot projects.

Media Contact Name: Jim Balick

Media E-mail: jim@newborncoalition.org

Media Phone: 858-353-3581

Media Web Address: www.newborncoalition.org

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