

The State

[Next Story >](#)

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Ingram: Text4baby gives new, expectant moms vital help

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Ingram

Columbia, SC — I am a mom. It is the hardest and most rewarding job I could ever imagine. My first child was born when I was quite young, my second not far behind. I am one of the lucky moms. I have a wonderful family, a great pediatrician and supportive co-workers who all gave me guidance during my pregnancy and in those early days of the kids' lives.

There are many moms in our state who have less help in the journey we call parenting.

Some may not have role models as I do in my own mother and grandmothers. Some may not enjoy health-care or prenatal-care benefits.

But South Carolina has an opportunity to support moms and caregivers, thanks to our partnership in a program called text4baby. Text4baby is the nation's only free mobile service that makes it easy for expecting and new moms to receive important health and safety information. Users can access essential health information quickly and easily using technology we already rely on every day: our cell phones.

Anyone can text BABY (BEBE for Spanish) to 511411, and receive free text messages — on healthy pregnancy signs, developmental milestones, nutrition and feeding, safety and more — three times per week, timed to mom's due date or a child's first birthday.

Since 2010, 74 percent of users report that text4baby messages informed them of medical warning signs they did not know about; 67 percent reported talking to their doctor about a topic from a text4baby message; 65 percent reported text4baby helped them remember an appointment for their child. Text4baby is not a substitute for a medical home, but it provides information to new moms to help their babies have the best possible start in life.

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies runs the program nationwide, with partners such as the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Cell phone carriers ensure text4baby is offered at no cost nationwide. Hundreds of outreach partners in the states have joined the coalition to spread the word across the country.

Currently South Carolina has 10,693 text4baby users. We know that more expectant moms could benefit if

they knew about text4baby.

Spread the word, or sign up yourself. It's free and effective. Helping parents in their awesome job is a wise investment of our time.

To learn more, visit text4baby.org and visit the text4baby SC Facebook page.

Samantha Catoe Ingram

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[Back to Top](#)

[< Previous Story](#)

Thursday letters: Accept national health care

[Next Story >](#)

Wednesday letters: GOP must answer for Benghazi

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