

Infant program gets \$5,000 grant

By AMY L. ZITKA
Middletown Press Staff

MIDDLETOWN — When Marilyn Dunkley was pregnant she went to the Community Health Center's Maternal/Infant Program for obstetrical and prenatal care.

At nine months, the city resident's fetus was at 10 pounds, and Dunkley knew her baby's foot was tucked into her ribs. On Nov. 19, Dunkley had a Cesarean section and Alicea Kathryn Olivia Dunkley was born weighing 11 pounds and 7 ounces.

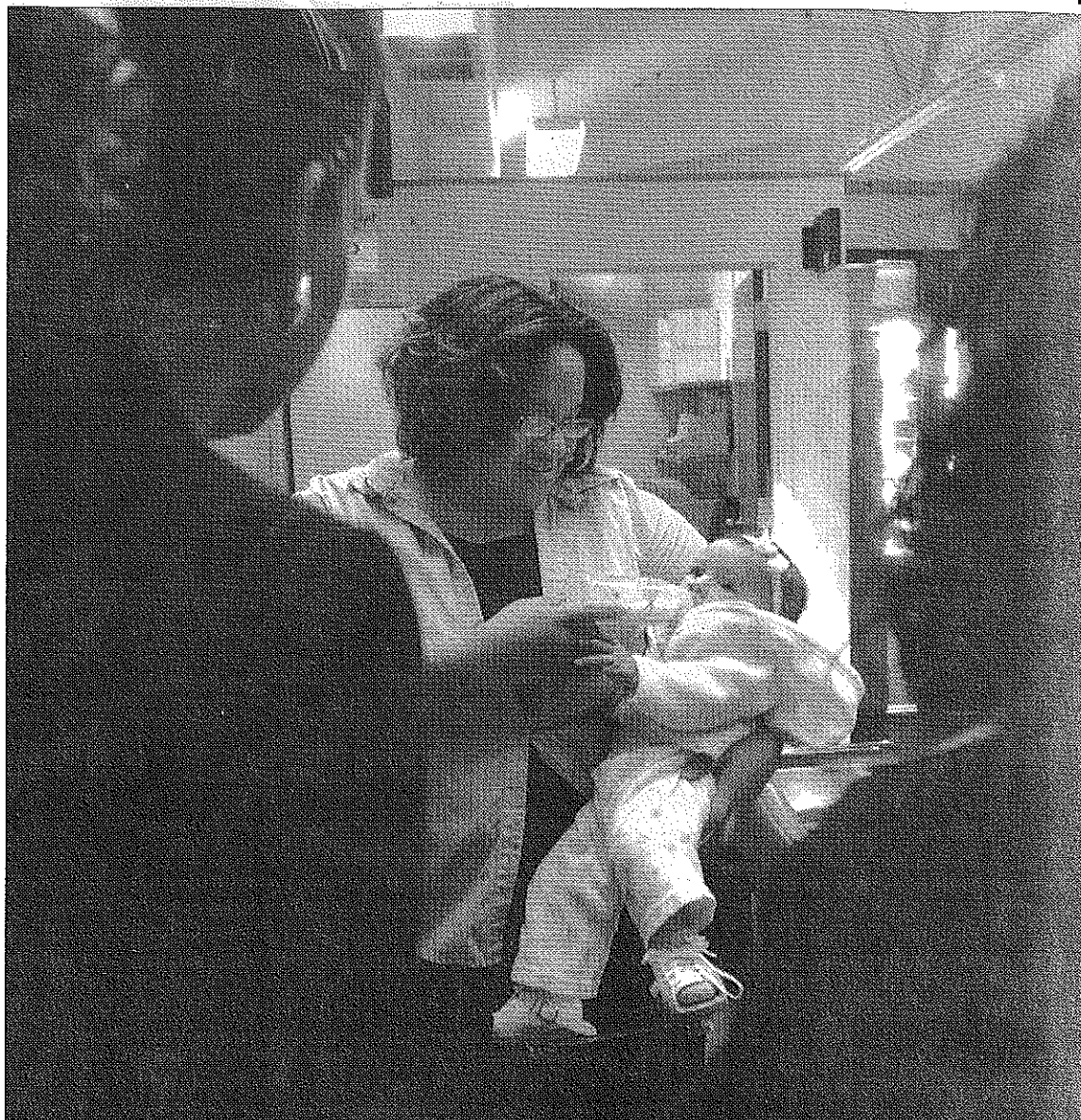
Alicea's foot was turned in. At 1.5 months old, she had surgery to cut a tendon on the back of her foot, "and now it looks fine," Dunkley said. Alicea will have to wear a brace for her club foot until she is 4 years old.

"I think it's awesome," Dunkley said about the Maternal/Infant Program as she held her now 3-month-old daughter. "I would be stuck between a rock and a hard place if it wasn't for the Community Health Center."

Dunkley is one of 300 clients seen throughout Middlesex County in the Community Health Center's program, which has been around since 1982.

The Liberty Bank Foundation on Monday awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Community Health Center, Inc. to support the Maternal/Infant Program.

The program represents a partnership between the Community Health Center and Middlesex Hospital and provides pregnancy testing, prenatal and postpartum care, risk assessment, nutrition counseling, lactation support, childbirth education,



Tom Warren/The Middletown Press

Val Juliano, manager of Liberty Bank's South Main Street branch and assistant manager Liz Abate watch as Marilyn Dunkley of Middletown feeds her 3-month-old daughter Alicea after Monday's press conference. Alicia is receiving treatment at the Community Health Center in Middletown for a club foot.

case management, and hospital visits, CHC Grant and Development Director Larisa Pazmiño said.

Maternal/Infant Program Manager Amy Gagliardi accepted a \$5,000 check from Liberty Bank officials with deep gratitude "from all of our mothers and babies."

"We'll put it to the best use," she said. "A small grant makes a huge difference."

"Helping babies get a healthy start is the foundation for better health throughout the rest of their lives," said Valerie Juliano, manager of Liberty Bank's South

Main Street office. Juliano presented the grant check. "We're proud to support this program, which addresses such a vital need."

The women served by the Maternal/Infant Program live in poverty, and may have other factors in their lives, which put themselves and their babies at risk, Pazmiño said. The program focuses special attention on ensuring prenatal care and offering support with other needs, such as WIC enrollment, quitting smoking and HIV testing. Any woman on public insurance or who is uninsured can get care through this program, she said.

Besides the Middletown office,

there is a satellite office in Clinton, which offers the same Maternal/Infant Program services, Gagliardi said. Services are also done on a sliding-fee scale.

"We wish we could do more," Gagliardi said. "It's really important for mothers to have a positive pregnancy. We do so much education during the pregnancy so they have a positive experience and a positive health outcome for the mother and the baby."

All babies are seen within a week after their birth, she said.

"Health is just so imperative, especially for babies," Juliano said.

To contact Amy L. Zitka, call (860)347-3331 ext. 211.

MIDDLETOWN