

*For Immediate Release*

## Legislators Promise Continued Support for Successful Prison Nursery Program

Indianapolis, IN (February 12, 2010) – This past Wednesday, members of the Legislative POWER (Political Organization for Women's Education and Representation) group hosted a baby shower for the Wee Ones Nursery (WON) program at the Indiana Women's Prison (IWP), thanks to donations by members of the General Assembly and their staff.

The women's caucus became interested in the Wee Ones Nursery at IWP and wanted to assist. Senator Earline Rogers said, "We just wanted to do what we could to help."



Members of the POWER group and Indiana Women's Prison (IWP) offenders participate in activities during a baby shower at IWP.

During the 2009 legislative session Senator Rogers and Representative Linda Lawson made points of privilege for all members of the General Assembly to donate needed items to the WON program. "The feedback was overwhelming. The mission [of the program] really struck at the hearts of the legislators," expressed Senator Rogers.

The WON program began at IWP in early 2008 for eligible pregnant offenders. Since its inception, over 30 infants and their mothers have enjoyed the benefits of the Wee Ones Nursery. For funding, the program currently relies on grants and donations. So far this year they have received a new grant from the Women's Fund.

Since the newborns live on a specialized unit with the mothers, each female offender must meet certain qualifications to be accepted into the program. The offender must be pregnant at the time she is delivered into IDOC custody and her earliest possible release date must be no more than eighteen months after the projected delivery date.



6-month old Angelina Hernandez and her mother Balbina Hernandez welcome the legislators to the Wee Ones Nursery.

The intent of the program is to provide parenting education and to ensure quality time to strengthen the mother-infant bond during the initial months after the infant's birth. Currently, offender mothers receive educational program instruction from Riley Development Center, Healthy Starts via the Marion County Health Department, and the Clarian Health Network. While visiting, the legislators were also able to take a short tour of the facility and enjoy lunch prepared for them by the female offenders.

IDOC Commissioner Edwin G. Buss added "We appreciate the support from lawmakers and also the staff at IWP for putting together this great event to bring attention to an exceptional program for our offenders."

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