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Oct. 24, 2011

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First-time mothers learn parenting skills through program

Brittany Robinson is the first to admit she didn't know the first thing about raising a child when she became pregnant in 2009.

The Corona resident learned about the Nurse-Family Partnership, a two-year program that helps first-time mothers learn about their pregnancies, giving birth and the sometimes difficult task of caring for an infant. The nurses who make weekly and bi-weekly home visits also teach the young mothers about breastfeeding and coping skills.

"I had no idea what was involved in being a mother," said Robinson, 23, who gave birth to Trinity while she was in the program. "There was so much."

Now Robinson and four other mothers will graduate Thursday (Oct. 27) from the Nurse-Family Partnership program during ceremonies at the Rubidoux Family Care center. The ceremony – complete with cap and gown -- will involve the graduates, their families and officials with the program, which is operated by the Riverside County Department of Public Health.

Robinson's fellow graduates are from Moreno Valley, Perris and Riverside.

"There are so many good things about the program," said Robinson, who explained the nurse visits helped make her more confident in her own abilities.

Mothers are asked to sign up by their 28th week of pregnancy and a nurse is assigned to her case. The nurse makes regular visits, helping the mother through the pregnancy and then continuing after the birth, teaching parenting and life skills.

The free program is part of a nationwide effort started in the 1970s that statistics show reduces child abuse and neglect, lowers the rate of emergency room visits and increases childhood readiness for school.

In Riverside County, 83 women have graduated from the program since it started in 2000. The next group of graduates will number more than 30.

To learn more about the program, go to <http://www.rivcoph.org> or call 951-358-5438.