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Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island Partners with Business Innovation Factory on LunaYou Initiative to Improve the Maternal Health Outcomes of its Members

LunaYou is a first-of-its-kind maternal wellbeing program focusing on empowerment

June 14, 2021 (Smithfield, RI) – Committed to improving maternal health outcomes in Rhode Island, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (Neighborhood) has partnered with the Business Innovation Factory (BIF) to bring LunaYou – a first-of-its-kind maternal wellbeing program – to its pregnant members. Developed by BIF to address the maternal health crisis in Rhode Island, LunaYou is a women-centric, empowerment-focused program that supports prenatal and postnatal care. LunaYou is open to all pregnant women, but it is designed to help Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) women – who historically have far poorer maternal health outcomes.

Neighborhood has invested in a two-year collaboration with BIF to start LunaYou as a free program to all of its members. Enrolled pregnant members gain access to knowledge and social connections to learn self-advocacy and personal wellbeing skills. The LunaYou program is available to women throughout pregnancy and for three months following the birth of their child. Services include access to the LunaYou mobile platform; a wellbeing coach; a blood pressure cuff and activity tracker; a digital dashboard that tracks seven indicators of maternal wellbeing; and the “LunaYou Mama’s Community”. Through personal journaling, a trusted circle of support, and an engaged community of fellow LunaYou participants, women are empowered to take charge of their pregnancy.

Neighborhood integrated the LunaYou program into Bright Start, the health plan’s established clinical program for pregnant members. Neighborhood’s care management team began recruiting participants for LunaYou in March and to date, 37 members have opted-in to the program.

“Since our founding, Neighborhood has focused on giving at-risk Rhode Islanders a voice in their health care, and has worked to address health disparities to improve health outcomes,” said Peter Marino, president and CEO of Neighborhood. “Connecting LunaYou to our offerings is one more way we can advocate for our members.”

The United States is facing a maternal health crisis and Rhode Island’s maternal health outcomes reflect national data. Nationally women are 50% more likely to die or experience a serious complication in childbirth than their mothers. Women on Medicaid are significantly more likely to develop life-threatening complications due to pregnancy than women who are privately insured. Black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth than white women are. Black and Latina women experience rising and disproportionately higher rates of premature births than white women.

“Maternal health in Rhode Island, just like across the nation, is a social, racial and economic issue that must be addressed,” said Saul Kaplan, founder and chief catalyst of BIF. “A growing body of research suggests that by enabling self-empowerment, social support, and personalized wellbeing we can reduce the risk of poor maternal health outcomes. This is a preventable problem and we are pleased to be partnering with Neighborhood on LunaYou to move the needle on this issue. Working together, we believe we will contribute to improving maternal health outcomes in Rhode Island.”

One of the ways LunaYou empowers women is by enabling them to visualize their own personal wellbeing progress on a mobile dashboard, visible only to the participant, to track seven indicators of maternal wellbeing throughout pregnancy. Those indicators include staying active, getting support from friends and family, increased personal empowerment, managing stress, getting enough sleep, having a healthy heart, and knowing your voice matters.

Dr. Yvonne Heredia, senior manager of care management and the health plan’s project lead for the LunaYou initiative, said, “We are thrilled to offer this innovative program to our pregnant members. The critical aspect of LunaYou is its focus on pregnancy empowerment as minority women historically have not been listened to by their providers during their pregnancies when expressing their concerns or symptoms. As a black woman and someone who was homeless and pregnant in my teens, I speak from experience and see tremendous potential in LunaYou.”

Dr. Heredia, who served as the lead obstetrics nurse at Providence Community Health Centers and in other women’s health roles before joining Neighborhood 15 years ago, added, “Our pregnant members will find their voice, learn to speak up for themselves, and become their own best health advocate by participating. This program teaches women how to take charge of their pregnancy and to set realistic wellbeing goals that put them at the center of their own pregnancy.”

As the health plan’s first members were pregnant women in RIte Care – Rhode Island’s Medicaid managed care program for pregnant women and low income adults – adding the LunaYou program to Neighborhood’s member benefits made sense to the organization. Additionally, Marino and Dr. Heredia noted that LunaYou aligns naturally with Neighborhood’s goal to apply interventions to social determinants of health (SDOH) indicators to improve medical outcomes.

All of the data captured in the LunaYou dashboard is generated by participants throughout pregnancy. It is collected from personal survey responses, the free blood pressure cuff and the activity tracker provided upon enrollment. To monitor the support its members receive through the LunaYou program, Neighborhood receives aggregate reports on members’ engagement in the wellbeing components of the program. At the conclusion of Neighborhood’s pilot of LunaYou, the health plan will consider making LunaYou available to all of its members based on measurable improvements in both clinical and maternal health outcomes.

Early feedback from some of Neighborhood’s initial members enrolled in LunaYou is positive, indicating the program may be providing the resources needed to improve maternal health outcomes. Comments from a sampling of participants are included below.

- “This is my first pregnancy and I'm doing this pregnancy alone as a parent. It feels really good to have the additional support.”
- “Tracking my blood pressure is really important to me and LunaYou gives me a peace of mind while pregnant.”
- “I really want to give birth naturally and to stay active while pregnant. LunaYou will help me stay accountable.”

ABOUT BIF:

The Business Innovation Factory (BIF) is a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2005. BIF designs new human-centered business models for social impact. Over the last 16 years, BIF has completed over 70 human-centered business model design projects across the country in healthcare, education and public services. BIF’s mission is to design, prototype, and commercialize new personalized empowerment models to measurably improve social system outcomes. BIF believes that empowering individuals with the tools, skills, and support needed to improve personal wellbeing will measurably improve targeted healthcare outcomes. Learn more about [BIF](#) and [LunaYou](#).

ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD:

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (Neighborhood) is a not-for-profit health maintenance organization (HMO) founded in December 1993 in partnership with Rhode Island’s Community Health Centers to ensure everyone in the state has access to high quality, cost-effective health care. Neighborhood serves over 212,000 members in the state with 81 percent of its membership Medicaid eligible through its ACCESS and TRUST plans and 6 percent of its membership utilizing Neighborhood’s INTEGRITY Medicare-Medicaid Plan (MMP). About 13 percent of Neighborhood’s members are individuals, families and small businesses who select one of eight Neighborhood commercial plans available through the health exchange, HealthSource RI. Of these members, about 85 percent qualify for federal subsidies to cover a portion of their costs. Today, Neighborhood—with over 500 employees and \$1.4 billion in revenue—serves one out of every five Rhode Islanders. Learn more at nhpri.org.

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