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Iowa's Nate Kaeding, San Diego Chargers Kicker, Joins *Count the Kicks* Campaign to Help Save Iowa Babies

Nate Kaeding, former kicker for the University of Iowa football team and current San Diego Chargers kicker, is calling attention to another important kind of kicking as the newest voice for Iowa's *Count the Kicks* campaign.

Kaeding, an Iowa City native, recorded three radio public service announcements that draw upon his role as a new dad and as a kicker to encourage Iowans to **Count the Kicks** to reduce their risk of having a stillbirth. Iowa's First Lady Mari Culver and U of I Football Coach Kirk Ferentz were the first Iowans to record radio PSAs for the campaign.

Counting the kicks daily during the third trimester of pregnancy can reduce the risk of having a stillbirth, which affects one out of every 150 pregnancies in the U.S. Kick counting is recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, yet many expectant parents do not know about this simple and potentially lifesaving practice.

In the U.S., more than 26,000 babies are stillborn each year, and in Iowa the number is close to 200. The goal of the *Count the Kicks* campaign is to cut Iowa's stillbirth numbers in half by educating expectant parents on the importance of counting the kicks daily during their third trimester of pregnancy. Counting kicks is recommended by the American College for Obstetricians and Gynecologists because it familiarizes parents with the baby's movements so they can seek medical attention if there is a significant decrease in kicks – a choice that can potentially save their child's life.

"Football fans know how important kicking is to winning or losing a game," explains Neil Mandsager, M.D., Medical Director for Perinatal Center of Iowa and University of Iowa alumni. "But as a physician who has cared for pregnant women for more than 20 years, I also know how important kicking is to the health of a baby. A missed kick at the end of a football game can be heartbreaking, but it pales in comparison to the tragedy of losing a baby near the end of an otherwise uneventful pregnancy."

Mandsager believes Iowa's *Count the Kicks* campaign has lifesaving potential, "There are not too many campaigns or community projects that actually have such an immediate potential to truly save lives, but in my medical opinion, this one does."

The campaign originated in Iowa with five Des Moines-area moms who each lost babies to stillbirth or infant death.

These Iowa moms, founders of a nonprofit organization called Healthy Birth Day, hope to expand the *Count the Kicks* campaign to other states once Iowa's campaign is fully underway.

The campaign is providing free educational brochures and posters to all Iowa maternal health care providers interested in participating. Expectant parents can also access the information at www.counthekicks.org.

To learn more about *Count the Kicks*, visit www.counthekicks.org.

Count the Kicks is a project of 