

# Alcohol: A decision the baby lives with forever

The TV announcement opens with actress Martha Y... of Bethel talking about serious problems

Fetal Alcohol

works as a ticket  
Bethel, plays the

part of a woman who is concerned about alcohol's effects on her baby.

"When I learned that alcohol could harm my unborn baby, I decided not to drink," she says. "Lisa, my second child, is bright, pretty, full of potential. I learned too late for Billy. I drank

when I was pregnant with Billy, and he was harmed for life."

Jack stars in one of two TV public service announcements funded by the state Office of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. The second spot delivers a similar message in an urban setting.

The two announcements are part of a new public information campaign to increase awareness of the dangers alcohol poses to pregnant women and their unborn babies.

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# • If the mother is drunk, so, too, is the baby

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"Many women don't realize that a pregnant woman never drinks alone. The alcohol passes directly from a mother's bloodstream through the placenta where it can damage the unborn child," explains Suzanne Perry, FAS coordinator for the state.

"The unborn child receives the same amount of alcohol as the mother.

If the mother is drunk, so, too, is the baby she's carrying."

Alcohol can cause irreversible physical and mental damage to the unborn child. Its most serious manifestation comes in the form of FAS, a distinct combination of irreversible physical and mental birth defects. FAS is only caused by drinking alcohol during pregnancy and is the only cause of mental retardation that is totally

preventable.

"Women who don't drink during their pregnancy don't give birth to FAS babies," Perry said. "It's as simple as that."

The new campaign is called "A Choice Your Baby Has to Live With," and focuses on improving pregnancy outcome, not describing possible damage.

Perry says research indicates preg-

nant women respond more positively to a message with hope than a pessimistic prognosis of fetal damage.

Two radio public service announcements accompany the television spots, which have been distributed statewide.

Alaska has the highest estimated incidence of FAS babies in the nation, and certain portions of the state record the highest FAS rate among any population in the world.