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Richmond

HEALTH

WINTER
2006-07

THIS SIDE UP

When Hayes, the son of Kyra Oliver Hitzeman and Ezra Hitzeman, was first born, the two parents knew about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) but didn't talk about it. But when 4 ½-month-old Hayes died a little more than four years ago from SIDS, the Hitzemans couldn't avoid the subject. In fact, they embraced it and formed the Hayes Hitzeman Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to research and awareness of the mysterious disease in which an otherwise healthy baby stops breathing.

The foundation recently launched the This Side Up campaign — an extension of the national Back to Sleep program — touting the importance of putting infants to sleep on their backs. Babies born at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center and CJW Medical Center now don onesies with the campaign slogan on the front — available at www.hayesfoundation.org — and parents are given one for home use. “Many people simply don't know that babies sleeping on their tummies are at a higher risk for SIDS, just as they might not know the importance of keeping babies out of grown-ups' beds or the danger of smoking near a baby,” Oliver Hitzeman says.

For more from our interview with Kyra Oliver Hitzeman, visit www.richmondmagazine.com. — SKM

