

Hair brushing connects mothers, daughters

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Social work professor Marva Lewis has always felt that hair brushing can be used as a tool to connect mothers and daughters, and now, her Early Connections Project is teaming up with the Tulane Medical Center to teach its hair-brushing program to the community.



Social work professor Marva Lewis, left, shares a laugh with Amy Loewy of the Garden District Book Shop as well as Barbara Cheatham and Sherita Henry of New Orleans Healthy Start, during a book donation to the Early Connections Project. (Photo by Joseph Halm)

The Early Connections Project, housed at the Tulane [School of Social Work](#), held a special pilot of its newest program entitled “Gentle Hair Brushing Time for Hospitalized Children” in August.

The project works with parents and patients in the pediatric unit as well as the pediatric intensive care unit. According to Lewis, the idea originally focused on infants.

“For the past two years, we've been working on an intervention that involves the hair-combing task with small, fragile babies,” she says. “Pediatrics is an older

population and a less fragile child than the NICU, but it is still in the same realm of a medically ill and hospitalized child.”

The team, which consisted of several students from the Tulane School of Social Work and the [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#), developed a 10-minute intervention to teach parents how to incorporate hair brushing into their child's daily routine.

Lewis says the intervention will help parents develop a healthy attachment with their child while also building confidence in caring for their hospitalized child.

The project has gathered support from the New Orleans Gulf South Booksellers Association. The group donated 25 copies of four different books including “I Love My Hair” by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley.

The donated books will help the project foster parent-child attachment relationships while simultaneously promoting the literacy behaviors of the mothers and strengthening community connections.

Amy Loewy of the New Orleans Gulf South Booksellers Association said the project was easy to support due to its unique structure and how it promotes reading between children and adults.

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