

Albert Blum Foundation Better Babies Clinic

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In April of 1922 an organization in Lodi known as the Albert Blum Foundation Better Babies Clinic was founded. Mr. Blum was head of public relations for a company called The United Piece Dye Works (UPDW) which at the time was the largest textile mill in the USA. The only one larger in the world was located in France. The original purpose of the foundation was to afford local mothers the opportunity to obtain nursing and medical advice in the care, feeding and upbringing of their little ones. The program met with immediate success and on March 1, 1922 the Blum foundation's first nurse was hired. Her name was Mrs. F.W. Reehl. Mrs. Reehl was a Lodi resident who began her ministrations under the guidance of Dr. Breevort and Dr. Greenberg. The clinic was located at 105 Main Street and it was there that nurse Reehl would tend to the visiting children. The intervening time was spent at family residences.

The growth of the Blum foundation was rapid and on June 1st another nurse was assigned to the medical staff. Her name was Mrs. F.T. Baker and her job was weighing babies. Among her first patients were babies Lucy Balina and Veronica Calibrese. Nurse Baker also instructed young mothers as to the proper care and feeding of their infants. During the summer of 1922 an aid from the Board of Education was made a member of the ever growing staff. This enabled older school children to receive the attention of the clinic's nursing staff. By then a dentist by the name of Dr. I. Lipschultz and an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist by the name of Dr. Hubbard were hired.

Early in 1923, the clinic nurses were facing the onslaught of what was then known as infantile paralysis later known as polio. My brother John succumbed to that dreaded disease in 1945 while in a respirator called The Iron Lung. In 1923 immediate steps were taken by the foundation to acquire the area's best orthopedic surgeons. This was made possible with funds that were provided by president of the UPDW Theodore Boettger. The nurses then began taking the afflicted children for treatment at the orthopedic hospital in Orange, NJ. Meanwhile the baby clinic attracted 1, 532 infants in its first year of operation. It soon became the biggest and the most successful of its kind in all of Bergen County. Home visits by the nursing staff soared to 1,317 by May of 1923.

At a Christmas party given for the children in 1923, Albert Blum told a reporter from a newspaper called the Lodi Bulletin that the children of today are the men and women of tomorrow. "Each one of us" he said "must help in every way to make them sturdy and reliant with healthy bodies to cope with the battles of life." For many of those children born in the mid-1920s one of those battles would be WWII.