

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

For Perinatal Council
Cathy Barbagallo
focusONe
925.975.0711
cbarbagallo@focusonemarketing.com

Berkeley Photographer Gives Back to the East Bay Community Through The Perinatal Council

Nan Phelps Helps and Inspires Young Mothers

Oakland, CA; April 30, 2007. Nan Phelps is an acclaimed portrait photographer working out of a studio on North Berkeley's Solano Avenue. Thirty years ago, Nan was a mother on welfare, afraid for her future. In 2006, by serving as a volunteer with The Perinatal Council, she found a way to support and inspire young mothers whose stories mirror her own. The Perinatal Council is an East Bay non-profit organization that reaches out to low-income families to help them get the support and resources they need to raise healthy, happy children. Nan Phelps' volunteer participation will make this Mother's Day a very special day for some of the families served by The Perinatal Council.

Moved by the stories of the young, pregnant and parenting women in the program who struggle to make ends meet while they finish school and find jobs, she offered portrait sessions to women in the teen parenting program in Oakland and young parents in the Black Infant Health program in Richmond. Nine young women sat for their portraits along with their children and in some cases, their husbands and partners.

Ms. Phelps will present the women with their framed photographs at a Mother's Day Photo Release Party at The Perinatal Council's Family Resource Center in Richmond on May 10 at 11 a.m. at 2727 Macdonald Avenue in Richmond. She is enthusiastic about demonstrating to these young families that they too can succeed through hard work and dedication. "Families are the most important part of life to me," said Nan. "There is nothing that is more nourishing and inspiring. I am passionate about our efforts to reach, touch, hear and appreciate each other. I most value perseverance and the growth that ensues from it."

Back when Nan was a young mother on welfare, she wondered how she was ever going to afford all the things a modern 'normal' life required. She wanted to get off welfare but that meant not having money for rent, gas, or childcare. "I would have no food stamps and no medical coverage for me and my two boys. Auto insurance was an obscene luxury on my budget. I lived in fear of a car emergency or the kids getting lice because the medicine was a whopping \$16! It felt like Mt. Everest to me," she said.

Nan felt compelled to pursue her dreams, so she worked hard to support herself and her young children, at one point working two jobs. She imagined herself as a photographer, doing what she loved: taking portraits of children and families in black and white. Some people told her she'd never make a living at being a photographer, but Nan never stopped working towards her goal. The emotional support she got from her parents, sisters and friends made a huge difference, but financially, she was on her own, "I did whatever I had to do to get financial help at my kids' schools, including cleaning toilets. Most of all, I worked to keep terror at bay. Working in the darkroom was and is completely soothing to me. I could do something real. I hoped I could make a living at it."

Nan began her career as a photographer in 1979 and has been in business in the Berkeley area since 1989. Today she lives her dream, taking unique black and white photographs of families, children and others attracted by her talent for expressing emotion through photographic art. She uses "old world" methods: film, because of its superior beauty and longevity, then prints the images on beautiful silver gelatin paper, herself. It's a very time consuming process but well worth the time and effort. Nan not only worked hard to overcome hardship and prove the skeptics wrong – today she takes time out of her busy schedule to give back to the community, doing what she loves and sending a message to young women whose stories mirror hers.

Ms. Phelps began volunteering with The Perinatal Council by participating in their Adopt-a-Family program, buying and wrapping holiday gifts for a young family whose situation reminded her of the challenges she faced as a young, low-income mother.

"Working with the families through The Perinatal Council is going full circle for me," said Nan Phelps. "I feel so privileged to spend time with families who are willing to share their lives with me, both in person and in the dark room. I want to say to all families: 'See what you have.' And to the families in The Perinatal Council: 'You can.'"

About The Perinatal Council

The Perinatal Council reaches out to families who are stressed and supports healthy births and the healthy development of babies and young children. Based in Oakland, California, each year the non-profit organization serves over 2,200 low-income families in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, with a special focus on pregnant and parenting teenagers. Dedicated staff and volunteers promote the health and well-being of the mother, baby and entire family before, during and after birth for several years. More information about the Perinatal Council is available at www.perinatalcouncil.org or by calling 510.903.7533.

About Nan Phelps Photography

Nan Phelps provides portrait and wedding photography services in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area. More information about Nan Phelps is available at www.nanphelps.com or by calling 510.528.8845.

###