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## A Special Thank You to a Special Person

On September 11, 1995 a spirited and talented lady joined the staff of the Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County, Inc. She and her husband had developed a fondness for the climate and lifestyle of our community from years of vacationing here. That led to a permanent move to Bradenton, seeking an employment opportunity and a match of her credentials with an opening we had. She brought experience in the medical arena as a practice manager for a group of six physicians in Indiana. A college degree and teaching background in accounting was accompanied with her impeccable references. We soon found that a strong work ethic was also part of her make up. Healthy Start had made a wonderful "find".



For more than twelve years now the same spirit and talent has showed up in much of what Healthy Start has accomplished in Manatee County. Through publication of four major research and planning documents known as "Service Delivery Plans", five (yes 5) major office location moves, 140 or so monthly board of directors meetings, hundreds of coalition committee meetings, a clean annual independent financial audit in each of her 12 years, with day to day countless meeting minutes, budgets, financial statements, funding allocations, state reports, provider reports, grant reports, pieces of correspondence, phone calls, faxes, emails, those special events and requests for "can you help me on this", we have seen her spirit and talent in action. Everything she has done as an integral part of our organization has ultimately benefited the pregnant women, infants and young families in our community, who are the reason we do what we do.

It is with great pride and sincere appreciation that I salute Nancy Pettit, our office manager and financial director throughout her tenure with Healthy Start. Now, a melancholy mood pervades our offices. There is a sadness that Nancy is moving on and will be missed, but an excitement for her and her husband as they take the next step on life's journey. Nancy has ridden off into retirement on January 31, 2008.

Thank you, Nancy, for all you have meant to Healthy Start.

Fred Leonard, Executive Director

## Three Kings' Day

For the first year, the Healthy Start Coalition celebrated Three Kings' Day with the families we serve. Thanks to the generosity of Czaia & Gallagher Attorneys At Law, we were able to provide the traditional sweet bread, chocolate milk, entertainment, and gifts to the families.

All families attending the event received gifts donated by the White family, Our Lady of the Angels Church, and Czaia & Gallagher. We were also blessed with an army of volunteers from Our Lady of the Angels church and the staff of Czaia & Gallagher who were on site helping with this event.



## Czaia and Gallagher Outreach Program

For the second year C.J. Czaia and Kevin Gallagher generously donated \$10,000 to the Healthy Start Coalition to support the outreach and education activities of the Community Health Workers. Through this program we are able to serve hundreds of families at risk and provide much needed education and information to ensure healthy and safe families.

These services are free of charge to any family in need in Manatee County and we take pride in serving families right "where they are" in a respectful and caring manner that takes into consideration their cultural and linguistic needs.



## Project Moses Supporter

Mrs. Connie Markowitz calls our office regularly with the good news that she has liners, blankets, and quilts for the families we serve through our Project Moses. This program was developed to provide safe sleeping education to moms and to make sure that every baby in need has a safe place to sleep.

We thank Mrs. Markowitz for her love and dedication.

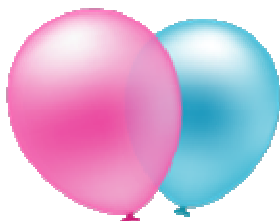


## Our Lady of the Angels Community

Their love and compassion have been present in many ways. They help us provide vitamins for pregnant women who cannot afford them. Their generosity has brought happiness at Christmas for the past four years to many families in need.

Members of the church give their time generously while we offer Christmas parties, health fair events, and the very special Loving Stitches Ministry provides our Project Moses with liners for the bassinets, blankets, and warm clothing for the babies to grow safe and healthy.

We want to express our gratitude to Father Damian Amantia, the Pastor of this wonderful community for his continued support and to all their parishioners who are indeed angels at work.



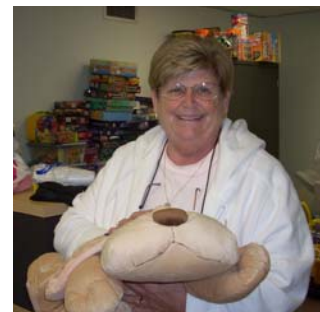
## Pilot Club of Manatee County

Healthy Start is very fortunate to have this wonderful group of women who support us all year around. They periodically stop by our office to make sure that we have diapers and baby clothing for those babies in need. At our recent Healthy Christmas from Healthy Start they helped cook, serve, clean-up, and distribute gifts for the moms learning healthy life choices.



## A Long Lasting Support

The Dem Women of Manatee County have provided for many years their unconditional support to our Healthy Start programs. They have conducted client satisfaction surveys, donated baby and maternity items, helped with community events, and have reached out to us every time we needed them.



We especially thank Pat Benson for her leadership and commitment and all her collaborators for caring for our moms and babies.

## First Teen Parent Night Out By Michele Smolder, MSW

The first Teen Parent Night Out was held on November 29, 2007 at the United Way facility in Bradenton. It was sponsored by Michele Smolder MSW, Community Based Care Coordinator for Healthy Start Manatee and The League of Women Voters Social Committee. Manatee County Teen Parents, their children and their parents or guardians were invited for dinner and activities. Community resources were made available as well as some door prizes donated by CareNet Pregnancy Center. Guest speaker Denise Grolly-Case from The Family Partnership Center answered questions for the teen parents and presented information on community programs. Everyone had a fun night and we hope to make this a quarterly event!



Michelle Smolder, MSW is one of our Community Based Care Coordinators and her expertise includes serving teen moms.

## Mother-Friendly Childbirth

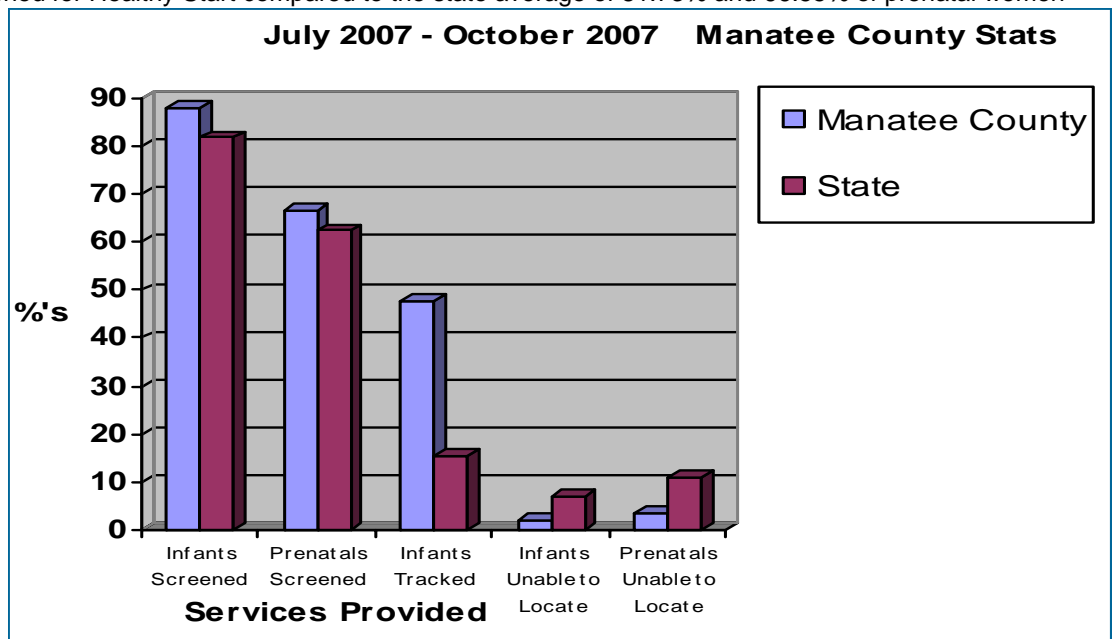
December's General Membership Meeting featured a presentation from Heidi Dahlborg, a licensed midwife, on "Mother-Friendly Childbirth." Heidi shared about the history of midwifery, the regulations that have shaped the practice, and the development of CIMS (Coalition for Improving Maternity Services). She also reviewed the research from "The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother Friendly Care" which outlines maternity care practices that serve as the basis of midwifery.



If anyone would be interested in attending the CIMS annual meeting in Orlando from March 6 – 8, 2008, more information can be found at [www.motherfriendly.org](http://www.motherfriendly.org).

## Local Screening Rates

Healthy Start has achieved significant success in the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year in terms of number of women and infants served and services delivered. From July 2007 – October 2007, 710 women and 955 infants received Healthy Start services. 88.05% of all infants born were screened for Healthy Start compared to the state average of 81.73% and 66.55% of prenatal women were screened compared to the state percentage of 62.41%. In addition, 47.64% of infants received tracking care coordination services, which greatly exceeds the state's average of 15.45%. Manatee County's system of hospital-based care coordination and community-based care coordination have proven successful in consistently contacting infants and mothers. A great big thank you to our providers who are committed to screening women and infants and to providing services to empower our clients for success!



## Sixty Years of Service and Love

Sr. Nora Brick celebrated 60 years of religious life and she was honored by the community at the Bradenton Country Club and at Project Light Literacy Center of Manatee. Sr. Nora Brick is the founder of Project Light Literacy Center and Still Point House of Prayer. Both organizations provide services to many families giving them an opportunity to learn English, preparing them to become citizens, helping them to meet their basic needs and most importantly providing a safe place where a person feels treated with dignity.

Healthy Start joins the community in thanking Sister Nora for her commitment and love to those who need the most and for her partnership to provide our moms and babies the best start in life. Moms attending the sewing classes presented Sister Nora with a quilt specially made for her on this joyful occasion.



## Relationship Skills for Parents

After taking a break over the summer from General Membership Meetings, the Coalition resumed meetings with a presentation from Kim Seiler, Carmen Meckman, and Aldo Botter of the Healthy Families/Healthy Children Program of the Jewish Family and Children's Services. Their presentation was entitled "Communication Skills Under Pressure."

This presentation provided an overview of the skills that are taught in the Love's Cradle Relationship Enhancement program. This program is intended to help new and expectant parents strengthen their relationship and parenting skills. Aldo guided participants through a sample of the type of relationship skills training that takes place at their sessions. Through the use of a video and discussion, participants learned about unskilled dialogue versus skilled dialogue and how couples should properly communicate about difficult issues. Aldo also introduced a fun way for couples to learn what they believe as individuals on fundamental values that may affect a relationship, such as finances, gender roles, and parenting.



If you are interested in further information regarding the Healthy Families/Healthy Children Program and about eligibility requirements for the program, please contact Carmen Meckman at 941-366-2224.

## Healthy Start Angels

Kristine and Steve White and family arrived this Christmas with plenty of gifts for our Healthy Start families. We are overwhelmed by their generosity and are very grateful to be counted among the organizations that they bless every year.

They arrived with plenty of helpers and loaded our offices with toys, baby items, and clothing for the families. Their love and compassion made hundreds of families very happy this Christmas. Thanks to their generosity we were able to distribute gifts to all our families in need.

We are grateful to the White family for their continued support.



## Cultural Competency

At our October General Membership Meeting, Edna Apostol, Executive Director of Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center was back by popular demand to give a presentation on “Cultural Competency.”

Edna reviewed racial and ethnic disparities in the healthcare profession and emphasized the need to improve service delivery through the lens of culture. Culture is what bonds members of a population together, through values, beliefs, patterns of behaviors and practices. As providers we must recognize that culture is a predominant force in shaping values, beliefs and practices. Many times we interact differently with people from diverse cultures and need to have a non-judgmental approach, recognizing that different practices are equally valid. Edna’s presentation reminds us to respect and celebrate differences so that we can best serve our clients.



## Early Year’s Brain Development

November’s General Membership Meeting featured a presentation from Liz Zaccagnino of the Early Learning Coalition on “The Early Year’s Brain Development.”

Liz discussed the role of the Early Learning Coalition in coordinating early care and education through public funding to ensure that all children are “ready” for kindergarten. Using a video, Liz emphasized that parents are their child’s first teacher and are essential in preparing children for school. Parents and caregivers can promote early brain development in children by promoting communication, literacy, music, safety and touch as a few examples. She also introduced the Dolly Parton’s IMAGINATION LIBRARY that provides a book monthly to each child registered in the program, at no cost.



If you have questions about early care and education programs, contact the Early Learning Coalition at 941-714-7449.

## Luz Corcuera Honored For Her Work

On November 26, 2007 Luz Corcuera was honored at the annual Cesar Chavez Memorial Dinner by the Sarasota/Manatee Farmworker Supporters for her “Outstanding Service to the Farm Workers in our Communities”.

Then, on December 7, 2007, Luz was recognized for her 2-year term as President of the Latino Community Network. Many of the community leaders attended this lunch meeting to thank Luz for her dedication and love of the Latino community and for her many hours of volunteer time serving as President.

Through her many Healthy Start programs, she brings her passion for changing the conditions of the farmworkers and strives to reach the pregnant women and moms to educate them on the importance of maternal and child health. Her team of Community Health Workers serve hundreds of Latino women, bringing face-to-face support, education, and providing referrals to services available in Manatee County.



As Pat Liebert said at the dinner, “Luz is a beacon of hope and love of those in need”. We are honored to have Luz on staff of the Healthy Start Coalition and know that through her efforts, many women and children are served.

## Interconceptional Care Project

The Healthy Start Coalition is committed to the well-being of all women and infants, including women who are in between pregnancies. Because of this, the Coalition has developed and implemented some exciting programs and events for the Interconceptional Care Project. In March of 2007, a Pilot Face-to-Face Nutritional Counseling and Follow-Up Project was started at Giangreco, Scarano, and Taylor Pediatrics under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Florentina Taylor. Through this program, women and their families struggling with healthy weight issues are referred to Registered Dietitians to be assessed and to learn about healthy nutritional habits. Since the inception of this project, approximately 50 families have received ongoing education and follow-up. We are delighted to have Sarah Krieger, Kristie Usher, Josie Lodrigue, Mallie Shirk, and Christine Gerbstadt providing assessment and counseling to the families we serve. We are currently in the process of expanding this program into other local practices, including Dr. Sevilla at the Whole Child Pediatrics, and possibly Dr. Mendez's practice.



In an added effort to promote nutritional well-being as an important factor in Interconceptional health, the Coalition has participated in community health fairs and events by presenting nutritional education. The Community Health Worker team distributed nutritional information and healthy snacks at "Unity in the Community" and the Children's Summit in August, the Bilingual Health Fair, and the Wellness Festival as well as at the Latino Community Network Educational Forum and the Healthy Start Christmas celebration in December. Promotional items, education and cooking demonstrations to approximately 1500 people.

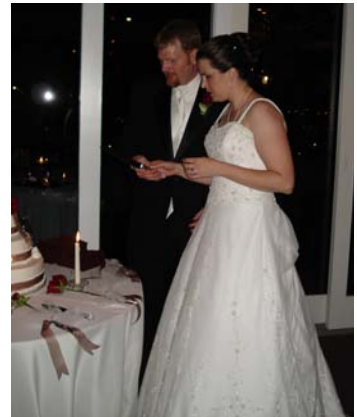


The other facet of the Interconceptional Care Project has been to focus on Smoking Cessation, as smoking is the most modifiable risk that leads to complications in birth. In April, the Coalition sponsored and organized a Smoking Cessation Training. At this training helpful educational materials were distributed and Healthy Start Care Coordinators received the necessary training and certification to provide smoking cessation classes for their clients. Throughout the year, smoking cessation information has continued to be distributed to local providers and care coordinators have provided valuable and effective smoking cessation information to clients. These preventions in combination with the nutrition programs have offered lifelong valuable information to promote interconceptional health and wellbeing for mothers and babies!



## A Thank You Note From Elisabeth Fisher

I have often heard it said that the only constant thing in life is change. Over the past year this phrase has become my life's mantra. Just over a year ago, I had resigned as the Care Coordinator Supervisor of the Healthy Start team at Manatee County Rural Health Services with the intention of going overseas for two years for full time missions. After selling my car, moving out of my place, and giving away the majority of my earthly possessions, it became apparent that there were other plans for my life when I met Joshua Mark, the most wonderful man on the face of the planet! This meeting started a whirlwind of activity which included returning to Bradenton and having the opportunity to work with the Healthy Start Coalition as the Provider Relations Director. In the midst of learning all about reporting and quality assurance and making contacts in the community, I also had the privilege of getting engaged and married. I have now come to another crossroads. My husband has been blessed to have gotten a full time position as a youth pastor at a church in Virginia. I once again stand in the face of incredible change as we will be moving at the end of December.



One of the many good things about change is that it provides an opportunity for reflection and evaluation. As I look back on the past year I realize that I gained a wealth of understanding about the entirety of the Healthy Start Program and just how much teamwork and sacrifice it takes on behalf of all the "players" to provide the services that we do to the community. The Healthy Start team is full of people who are dedicated, committed, tireless, compassionate and full of passion for mothers and babies. I have been challenged to grow professionally and personally and consider it an honor and privilege to have worked and served side by side with my co-workers. I want to thank all of my co-workers first and foremost for the example you set to everyone you come in contact with. Such compassion and dedication are rare commodities. Thank you for the opportunities, support, and encouragement you have provided for me in the midst of constant change. I will miss this community and the Healthy Start family but know that only good things lie ahead for Healthy Start and the clients we serve!



## Folic Acid Education Campaign 2007

Thanks to the generous support of the March of Dimes, the Healthy Start Coalition provided folic acid education and information to 1100 families in Manatee County in 2007. Through outreach and education, the Community Health Workers delivered folic acid education to childbearing age women and their families in Hispanic Latino and African American neighborhoods.

This very successful campaign provided an opportunity to join efforts with community partners and faith based organizations to bring awareness of the importance of folic acid intake in our daily diet and the use of multivitamins for childbearing age women. Cooking demonstrations and fun activities enhanced their learning.

