



2021 Summer Newsletter



Celebrating *THIRTY* Years!!!

**The Florida Healthy Start program is celebrating
30 years of healthier babies.**

Infant mortality is often used as an indicator to measure the health and well-being of a community or society. Florida has made the right investment in creating and supporting 32 Healthy Start Coalitions that provide focused energies on the health and well-being of pregnant and parenting women and their babies, in their geographical area. Florida went from being a perennial national laggard at the bottom of America's infant mortality rankings to a national leader for healthy mothers and babies, reducing our state's infant mortality rate by 32.6 percent since 1991.

Healthy Start is the umbrella and safety net for the maternal and child health system of care in every community. Pregnant women and infants cannot get the essential services that Healthy Start provides anywhere else. This unique program improves health outcomes for a lifetime, and positions children and their families for increased opportunities for success. Let us celebrate these achievements as we reap the emotional and economic benefits in the future.

**In fiscal year 2019-2020, Healthy Start served
471 Pregnant Women and 200 Infants and Children
throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties!**

[Visit our website](#)

WORLD'S GREATEST BABY SHOWER



The World's Greatest Baby Shower Went Virtual!

In April of 2021, the Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties hosted their annual event, The World's Greatest Baby Shower. However, this year's event looked a bit different. To continue the tradition of this celebratory event, while maintaining the safety of our target population, the decision was made that the 2021 World's Greatest Baby Shower would be virtual. The Coalition invested in a virtual event platform called Jujama and used social media and other various mediums to advertise the event. The virtual event ran for two weeks, from April 1st to April 14th giving attendees time to explore the event content.

There were 27 exhibitors; ranging from hospitals, chiropractors, community services, and baby clothing boutiques, who provided content for their virtual booths. Virtual booths included organization descriptions, videos, documents, and links to websites and social media. Other content inside the virtual event included educational videos, surveys, and "enter to win" raffles. We had 312 New or Expecting Mothers and 12 Community Guests/Family Members register for the event. The entire event culminated in a Prize Pick-up Drive Through where attendees could come to pick up any prizes they won and the event bag that they earned. A total of 35 gifts were raffled off and over 60 women attended the Drive Through. Gifts included baby items including car seats, pack n' plays, gift baskets, gift cards, baby monitors, two full sized cribs, and more!

Many prize winners had these kind words to share after the event:

"Thank you so much for the entire event! It was really amazing! Also, thank you for the crib I won, it's a huge blessing for our family! - Emalee

"I really appreciate the baby monitor I won; it will go to good use! The great information I received at the virtual baby shower was terrific!" - Adrienne

"The diaper bag with all the goodies inside will come to such great use, thank you so much! Very thoughtful!" – Jennifer

"I am so grateful for this virtual baby shower event because it was very informative and helpful. This is my first baby, and I am active duty and away from my family. Thank you so much!"- Maddie

"Thank you so much for my gifts! Paying it forward always blesses you in

return! God bless you!" - Hannah

This event would not have been possible without the support of our many sponsors, exhibitors, donators, and volunteers. We look forward to your continued support as we start to plan the next World's Greatest Baby Shower! Tentatively scheduled for Thursday May 26th, 2022. If you would like to be added to the email list for event updates such as exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities, please email our Community Liaison, Asia Randolph, at asia@hsow.org.



Pictured above: Top photo- Community Liaison's, Jordyn Autry and Asia Randolph. Bottom photo- Ardelle Bush; Executive Director of the Healthy Start Coalition along with one of the World's Greatest Baby Shower Crib and Mattress Winners!

Thank you to ALL the OB/GYN Physicians and Labor and Delivery Hospitals throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties for participating in the Healthy Start Prenatal and Infant Screening process!

Extraordinary Volunteers

In January 2021, Healthy Start Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry, gave the Women's Service Group of the First United Methodist Church of Crestview a presentation on the Healthy Start Program and shared what the mission of the program is and what community outreach/home visiting services are provided. Jordyn shared several projects that we were



looking for volunteers and assistance with. Shortly after that meeting, she received a phone call from Eileen Kurtz, a member of the Women's Service Group, who wanted to donate her time. Over the next few months, Jordyn and Eileen would meet once a week and swap boxes of the Charlie's Kids Foundation's Board Book "Sleep Baby; Safe and Snug". Eileen would take the books home and place a sticker on the back that had the Healthy Start Coalition's contact information.

These board books are a part of a three-year long safe sleep initiative that the Coalition, with partnership from the Okaloosa County Department of Health, has implemented at our local Labor and Delivery Hospitals. Each new parent that delivers at Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, North Okaloosa Medical Center, or Sacred Heart on the Emerald Coast goes home with a copy of the Safe Sleep Book.

Over a several months, Eileen labeled 4500 books! Shortly after, Eileen and Jordyn came up with a plan to involve the rest of the ladies in the service group. In May, they organized a date with 12 amazing ladies from the group to label the remaining inventory of 1,140 books. After they completed this helpful task, they proceeded to highlight and prep 500 Healthy Start Prenatal Screening forms.

We cannot thank Eileen and the rest of the Women's Service Group enough for their time and assistance. When volunteers assist the

Coalition with various projects like these, Coalition Staff can put more time and effort into other projects that support the women and infants in our community.

If you or your organization is interested in assisting the Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties with various projects, please contact Community Liaison, Asia Randolph, at asia@hsow.org.

Coalition Staff Updates

Farewell and Celebrations



The Coalition staff enjoyed a nice lunch outing to say farewell to Community Liaison, **Jordyn Autry** and to celebrate two healthy babies soon to be born to our two Coordinated Intake and Referral Specialists: **Gisselle Bretz and Sharlon Lopez**.

Pictured Left to Right: Jordyn Autry, Ardelle Bush, Asia Randolph, Gisselle Bretz, Victoria Worlds.

Congratulations to the Bretz Family on the Birth of Their New Baby!



Gizzelle Bretz, our Coordinated intake and Referral Supervisor, calls and speaks with close to 50 pregnant or parenting women each week to talk about their pregnancy and parenting needs. As a mother of two beautiful daughters and the wife of an active duty military husband, she certainly understands the demands, stresses, and concerns our clients are dealing with. Her understanding and caring approach, with the women she speaks with, goes a long way in getting them to the helpful home visiting programs they desire, community resources they need, and medical professionals needed for prenatal and postnatal care.



Pictured Above: Coordinated Intake and Referral Supervisor, Gisselle along with her husband, Justin Bretz, Olivia, and Lillian.

Two New Certified Car Seat Safety Specialist

Congratulations to Care Coordinators, Chandler Spencer and Sonia Scott, for earning their National Child Passenger Safety Certification. In-person car seat classes should resume this fall. Classes will be posted on the Coalition's website calendar.



Pictured on the Left; Chandler Spencer. Pictured on the Right; Sonia Scott.

Are you looking for Family Resources?

Click the button below for our 2019-2022 Family Resource Directory.

If you would like a physical copy, please reach out to asia@hsow.org.

Resource Directory

Healthy Start Hosted a Workshop on The Power of Positive Communications

Communication is always changing and adapting. We all experienced this over the past year and a half with COVID-19 restrictions forcing us to work from home for some time and transitioning all communications with others virtually, through platforms like Zoom. In many ways, these new methods of communicating with coworkers and the outside world have changed permanently but one thing has not: the power of positive communication. In this dynamic workshop, **speaker Susan C Young** taught how to put the

power of positive communication to work. This custom designed presentation was created specifically for **Healthy Start's Coordinated Intake and Referral personnel, Healthy Start workers, Community Liaisons, and Coalition leadership.**

The 115 statewide participants learned how to:

- Boost engagement for healthy interactions with their clients and team.
- Identify personality styles and love languages to connect with people where they reside.
- Build friendly rapport through encouraging words, strategic questions, and personal solutions.
- Apply the essential elements for Crucial Conversations to talk about the tough stuff with patience, compassion, and mutual respect.
- Increase and leverage your Emotional Intelligence to transform relationship results.



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