



# getting off to a HealthyStart

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## THANK YOU ALL FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL INFANT MORTALITY AWARENESS MONTH!

Last September, Healthy Start, along with the rest of the nation, commemorated National Infant Mortality Awareness Month (NIMAM). This year was even more monumental because the U.S. Senate passed a resolution at the end of September 2009 that spotlighted the tragedy of infant mortality in this country and expressed support for “efforts to reduce infant deaths, low-birth weight, pre-term births and disparities in perinatal outcomes.” The resolution, S. Res. 299, passed the Senate by unanimous consent and represents the first time in four years that the Senate passed a resolution specifically focused on infant mortality and the importance of community-based services such as outreach, home visitation, case management, health education and interconceptional care. In addition, the U.S. House passed a similar resolution (H.Res.260) expressing support for improved prenatal care and the need to improve birth outcomes in this country. This marks the first time ever that both the House and Senate have passed infant mortality resolutions in the same year. Thank you to everyone who sent us news articles, proclamations, flyers and photos of how your Healthy Start educated the community on infant mortality and gave a voice to the millions of children who did not make it to

their first birthday. Below are highlights from Healthy Start events held across the country to celebrate the month:

### NIMAM 2009 Highlights:

*St. Petersburg Healthy Start Federal Project* hosted a Birthday Extravaganza for the community. The event celebrated the babies in the community who lived to reach their 1st birthday. There were several health screenings offered to adults and various activities for all who attended. The Mayor and County Commissioners offices both issued proclamations for the event as well. There were about forty consumers in attendance

*The Northwest Indiana Healthy Start*, along with the Lake County Perinatal Network sponsored a daylong conference titled, “Perinatal Disparities: Finding Solutions to Heal Our Communities - A Call to Action.” Speakers included Dr. Stanley Graven and Dr. Fleta Mask Jackson. Both made thought provoking presentations that lead to the subject matter of several breakout sessions. When the action groups reconvened for group reports, an action plan was developed. They had a wonderful turn out.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



The Stroll-a-thon was made up of 71 empty baby strollers representing the number of East Baton Rouge Parish infants never reaching their first birthday in 2006.

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The National Healthy Start Association is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to promote the development of community-based maternal and child health programs, particularly those addressing the issues of infant mortality, low birth weight and racial disparity.

message from

## THE PRESIDENT

### A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO THE NHSA NETWORK!

**O**n behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to wish the entire NHSA Network Happy New Year!

Accomplishments in 2009 by the Executive Director and staff, along with each of you alone have indeed been impressive. As always, we extend our thanks for the dedicated efforts of the thousands of you who work tirelessly on behalf of our Healthy Start Families across the country!

There are many reasons to be optimistic about 2010. I believe that innovative capability is one of our major strengths. The resilience and creativity of Healthy Start projects reflect changes that are underway across our country. In this New Year, we must call for vigorous opportunities to share data and stress the importance of "quality driven" programs that combine performance assessments, consumer driven decision making and health information technologies. HRSA's Maternal Child and Health Bureau continues to serve as a pathway nationwide for coordination, promotion of best practices and development of frameworks that foster positive child and family outcomes. We must continue to strive for alliances that demonstrate validated results for male involvement and Maternal Child Health programs.

As we prepare for the Leadership Training Institute and Spring Conference, we look forward to your participation and the immense diversity and talent of excellence that you and your colleagues across the nation will bring to these events. I am confident that as we enter a new decade we will be strongly positioned with a renewed spirit and determination towards more progress and success. The NHSA Board is proud to be your national advocate, and we will continue to work toward the goals to ensure that every baby has a Healthy Start.

Best Wishes to you and your families for the New Year.



Cynthia A. Dean, President  
NHSA Board of Directors



greetings from

## THE NATIONAL OFFICE

It's hard to believe that it is 2010 and the beginning of a new decade. I am so excited about this year and all of the things NHTSA will accomplish over the next twelve months. I am looking forward to collaborating more with our current partners and new partners. As a health reform bill is on the brink of being passed (hopefully soon) and the structure of home visitation is being determined, NHTSA is committed to working even harder with our members and with agencies like the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, the National Headstart Association, the Nurse Family Partnership and the Pew Home Visiting Campaign, to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of families in this country. We know that it is through collective efforts that we can truly combat the issue of infant mortality as well as poor perinatal health, birth and pregnancy outcomes.

NHTSA kicked off the New Year with recognition of the organization's work on behalf of mothers and children. NHTSA was selected as the recipient by the Birthing Project USA for their 2010 Harriet Tubman Community Partnership Award. This award is presented annually to a national organization that has partnered at the community level with local Birthing Projects to work on behalf of women and children and their families. In addition, the 2010 recipient of the Community Trail Blazer Award is the manager of the Jacksonville, Florida Birthing Project, which is a component of the Jacksonville Healthy Start. We are humbled to receive this recognition and are working to build a stronger relationship with the Birthing Project and their sites across the U.S.

This recognition came at such a pivotal time. As I reflected over the holiday break, about all that had been done for women and children in 2009, I couldn't help but think about how much more there is to do. Therefore, I decided that as I made personal New Year's resolutions, I would also make a couple of professional resolutions for the work I do every day on behalf of moms, dads and children. So, I am committing to do at least two things different than I did last year to bring attention to infant deaths, poor health outcomes in communities and perinatal health disparities. I recognize that we are upon a new time, a new administration and new expectations. What I have done in the past may not work as well as today. It is important that I explore new strategies to accomplish these goals. I also charge you with thinking about what you will do differently this year to improve the health and well-being of children and families. If ever there was a time to think outside of the box, this is it!

We start our new year a little outside of the box, with a new look for the newsletter.

This quarter's issue captures some of the work NHTSA conducted in the latter part of the year. From a snapshot of the events held by projects for National Infant Mortality Month to our discussion with Dr. Mary Wakefield, HRSA

Administrator, we were busy working on behalf of families. This year will be no different especially with our Spring Conference fast approaching. The planning committee and staff have been working hard to ensure this is the most dynamic conference ever! It is not one to miss with cutting edge workshop sessions and distinguished speakers such as Tonya Lewis Lee, spokesperson for the OMH Healthy Baby Begins with You Campaign, Dr. Richard David, Neonatologist at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, and Dr. Willie Parker, Medical Director, Planned Parenthood of Metro DC. We look forward to hosting our members, Healthy Start families, and partners in March in D.C.

To that end, I want to thank you all for your support over the last ten months as I settled into my position and for your commitment to the work of the Association. From new leadership to increased funding for Healthy Start programs, the Association experienced some challenges but also some exciting achievements. We have created new partnerships, embarked upon new opportunities, and strengthened the brand of the organization. This is only the beginning. We have even more exciting things to come in 2010!

I wish each of you a prosperous and exciting New Year!



Stacey D. Cunningham, MSW, MPH  
Executive Director





## JUST 2 MORE MONTHS UNTIL THE NHSA 11TH ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE!

The National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) hopes that you will join us on March 14-17, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

Our 2010 conference will explore current research and best practices across the following tracks: (1) Mental Health, (2) The Life-Course Perspective, (3) Advocacy and Health Policy, (4) Family Involvement, (5) Research & Evaluation, and (6) Woman, Child & Adolescent Health. The workshops and plenary will cover topic areas that are related to NHSA's vision of reducing infant mortality nationwide and improving perinatal health disparities, such as preconception and interconception health care and services, perinatal and postpartum depression, and male involvement and fatherhood initiatives. Our conference promises to educate, motivate and promote collaboration among the 500+ attendees made up of Healthy Start project directors and staff, health care providers, MCH professionals, social workers, outreach workers and consumers.

### Conference Highlights:

- **Congressional Reception on Capitol Hill**

The reception offers an opportunity for the Association and Healthy Start projects to introduce Congressional Representatives to the Healthy Start "family" that have been selected to receive awards from the NHSA. This is a wonderful time to network with representatives from other Healthy Start projects. Free to conference attendees and only \$20 per additional guest.

- **Relax Your Mind, Recharge Your Body, and Revive Your Soul!**

Start Each Day in a Healthy Way! Join us during the conference to get your heart rate up and your body moving! Our fitness guru will take us through 45 minutes of cardio for every level – beginner, intermediate or advanced and 15 minutes of stretching, nutritional tips and cool down. You don't want to miss this opportunity to maybe jumpstart a new exercise regimen or continue staying fit while on the road. We hope to see you there! Only \$10 per morning.

- **Dessert with the Exhibitors**

You will have an opportunity to enjoy tasty desserts while touring the exhibit hall and speaking with conference exhibitors.

### Make your hotel reservations TODAY!

To make sure you get a hotel room at the conference host site, please make your hotel reservations TODAY with Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. You can reserve your room online at [http://washingtonregency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/group-booking.jsp?\\_requestid=7458](http://washingtonregency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/group-booking.jsp?_requestid=7458) -OR- by calling (888) 591-1234. When calling, be sure to mention you are with the National Healthy Start Association (Grouping Code: G-NHS2) to receive the discounted rates listed below. The room rate does not include taxes or fees. The deadline for reservations at the discounted rate is February 15, 2010, so make sure you don't miss out on the great deal!

Single Occupancy \$269

Double Occupancy \$294

Triple Occupancy \$319

Quadruple Occupancy \$ 344

If you are interested in becoming an exhibitor or sponsor the Annual Spring Conference please [click here for the Exhibitor and Sponsor Prospectus](#). For more Conference details, [check out the preliminary agenda!](#)

We can't wait to see you in March!

## Healthy Start in the News

**Has your Healthy Start project been in the news lately?** Send links to newspaper articles, TV news stories or radio and TV PSAs to [info@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:info@nationalhealthystart.org) so they can be shared with your fellow members.





# DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE HSLTI!!



From left: Stacey Cunningham, Carol Bryant Payne, Alma Roberts

Not only is the Spring Conference fast approaching, but the next Healthy Start Leadership Training Institute is too! We look forward to hosting the Healthy Start project directors and staff in Washington, DC March 13-14 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill (please see Spring Conference section of this newsletter for hotel reservation information).

The last HSLTI in October 2009 was a huge hit! The inclusion of the new track, "Grants from A to Z" was well received by participants. One person said, "This track was very informative! Now I know more about the HRSA grant, grant writing, requirements, stipulation, etc. I have a Finance Director that is responsible for the actual management and submission of finances and reports for the HRSA grant, but this is information that I definitely needed to know." We encourage all Project Directors, especially new grantees to take this track in the future.

The October HSLTI also had dynamic guest speakers that helped to motivate and inspire attendees to continue to be leaders in their communities. Carol Bryant Payne of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Baltimore, MD showed attendees how passion for the work that you do and strong determination to fight for those who do not have a voice can pack a powerful force for change in our communities. Jon Terry, NHSA Government Relations Consultant, and Don Owens, Press Secretary for Congressman Bob Etheridge (D-NC), both informed attendees of how their advocacy and messaging can help policy makers and elected officials gain a better understanding of the importance of Healthy Start in the nation. Mr. Owens showed participants how creating consistent and short messages can be effective and informative with a variety of audiences. By the end of the HSLTI, participants were motivated, inspired and encouraged.

The highlight of the Institute was the award presentation to Beverly Wright, who has retired from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) after many years of service. NHSA Board Members Madie Robinson and Belinda Pettiford recognized how Beverly's heart and compassion made her the best person for the job. This was not just work for Beverly all these years, but a way of life that changes the lives of women and children everywhere. Beverly was genuinely surprised by this recognition and thankful

for the kind words and warm farewell.

The next HSLTI promises to be just as rewarding. The session will include the following tracks:

- **Track 1: Healthy Start Strategies for Success**
- **Track 2: Leadership Practices for Managers**
- **Track 3: Grants from A to Z**
- **Track 4: Meeting Leadership Challenges with Inspiration**
- **Track 5: Developing Community-Based Leaders and Sustaining and Growing a Healthy Start Program**

## Track Requirements

### Track I

- Project Directors and senior staff who have been in their respective senior or leadership roles for five (5) years or less.

### Tracks II - V

- Participants who have less than five (5) years of Healthy Start experience and have completed Track I, Orientation to Healthy Start;

OR

- Participants who have not attended Track I, but have more than six (6) years of tenure as a Healthy Start Project Director, Finance Director or Operations Manager or equivalent senior level experience.

This will also be a great opportunity for you to meet and network with other Healthy Start project directors and staff, as well as the NHSA staff. Please visit the NHSA website for a detailed description of each track and the agenda. Apply TODAY! [Click here for the HSLTI application.](#)

For more information, contact Phyllis George at [pgeorge@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:pgeorge@nationalhealthystart.org).



From left: Madie Robinson, Beverly Wright, Belinda Pettiford

## PARTNER'S CORNER:



Premature birth remains a growing concern for communities across our nation

November 2009 marked Prematurity Awareness Month. The March of Dimes extends sincere thanks to National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) for its continued partnership and year-round efforts to increase the awareness of the problems of preterm birth throughout its local healthy start communities.



For the second consecutive year, the United States earned only a "D" on the March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card, demonstrating that more than half a million

of our nation's newborns didn't get the healthy start they deserved.

In the 2009 Premature Birth Report card, seven states improved their performance by one letter grade and two fared worse. Criteria that affect preterm birth improved in many states:

- 33 states and the District of Columbia reduced the percentage of women of childbearing age who smoke;
- 21 states and the District of Columbia reduced the percent of uninsured women of childbearing age;
- 27 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico lowered the late preterm birth rate.

As in 2008, no state earned an "A," and only Vermont received a "B." The grades were determined by comparing preterm birth rates to the national Healthy People 2010 preterm birth objective, which is 7.6 percent of all live births. The U.S. preliminary preterm birth rate was 12.7 percent in 2007.

"Although we don't yet understand all the factors that contribute to premature birth, we do know some interventions that can help prevent it, and we must consistently make use of all of these," said Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, President of the March of Dimes. She cited smoking cessation programs;

health care before and during pregnancy; progesterone supplementation; and improved adherence to professional guidelines on fertility treatment and early Cesarean-sections and inductions.

According to the March of Dimes, quality improvement programs also are keys to lowering preterm birth rates. For example, a program run by the Hospital Corporation of America based in Tennessee, which delivers about 5 percent of all U.S. births in the 21 states it serves, reduced the primary C-section rate, lowered maternal and fetal injuries and reduced the cost of obstetric malpractice claims by 500 percent. Also, Parkland Memorial Hospital in Texas reduced its preterm birth rate to 4.9 percent in 2006 from 10.4 percent in 1988 by establishing a comprehensive, community-based public health care system of prenatal care that targets minority pregnant women.

In the United States, more than 540,000 babies are born too soon each year. Preterm birth is a serious health problem that costs the United States more than \$26 billion annually, according to the Institute of Medicine. It is the leading cause of newborn death, and babies who survive an early birth often face the risk of lifetime health challenges, such as breathing problems, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and others. A March of Dimes report released in October found that 13 million babies worldwide were born preterm and more than one million die each year.

You may view more information about preterm birth at [http://marchofdimes.com/prematurity/index\\_map.asp](http://marchofdimes.com/prematurity/index_map.asp)— which also includes state profiles on prematurity and ways for volunteers to help reduce the premature rate.

The March of Dimes is the leading organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com) or [www.nacersano.org](http://www.nacersano.org).



# CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT:

## AMANDA MOSES

Amanda Moss, 28, and her husband, Vernon, live in Williamsburg, KY and have two children, Vernon Lee, 9 and Rachel, 3. Amanda has been a Voices of Appalachia Healthy Start participant since April 2006. She learned of the program at the local Health Department and was interested in signing up. Amanda was pregnant at the time and has been an active Healthy Start participant ever since.

She is currently enrolled in the interconceptional piece of the program and continues to actively participate in Healthy Start activities. Amanda has been a faithful attendee of all of the Voices of Appalachia Healthy Start parent workshops, ranging from child development education to arts and crafts. She also attends the local community workshops held at the site.

While participating in the program, Amanda has accomplished a great deal. With a help from her case manager, Amanda was able to acquire baby supplies for both her first and second pregnancy, as well as attaining a car seat through the consortium-based Car Seat Program. Amanda also quit smoking, which was possibly her most important accomplishment yet. With Healthy Start support and education, as well as linkage to the local Tobacco Coordinator, Amanda was able to quit smoking during

her first pregnancy and to remain smoke-free even today! According to her case manager, Vicki Dugger, "Amanda is a very determined young woman. With a little bit of help, she always goes a long way!"



The Voices of Appalachia Healthy Start helped to link Amanda with the Firststeps Program when she had questions about her daughter's child development. She also enjoyed participating in the Healthy Start Parent Store, which was a parent incentive program that allowed clients to earn "Parent Bucks" for meet-

ing goals, which could then be used in the Parent Store to buy cleaning supplies, baby supplies, school supplies, etc. Amanda became a member of the community-based consortium about nine months ago and has been a faithful attendee at all of the meetings. She is eager to participate in any projects that come up and is also a member of the Interconceptional Learning Collaborative Team.

Currently, with the support of her outreach worker, Amanda is working on taking her ACT test, so that she can enroll in college classes. In addition, Amanda has lost over 70 lbs. in the last year! She is active in her community as well, working with the Share Program and Angel Food Ministries Program within her church as well as heading up one of the church youth groups. "Healthy Start has been a great support in my life," says Amanda.



# PARTNERSHIP UPDATE!

## ELIMINATING RACIAL INEQUITIES IN INFANT MORTALITY

In 2008, AMCHP, CityMatCH, and the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) — with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation — launched the Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality to eliminate racial inequities contributing to infant mortality within U.S. urban areas. The following six teams are participating in the 18-month long Action Learning Collaborative (ALC): Los Angeles, California; Aurora, Colorado; Pinellas County, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Columbus, Ohio; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The emphasis of this ALC is on innovative approaches to reducing racial inequities in infant mortality in urban communities, with particular attention paid to the impact of racism. During 2008-2009, representatives from the six teams attended two onsite meetings of the ALC. The two meetings were designed to build upon one another to address the concepts of race, racism and the impact of stress on birth outcomes. Teams have also increased their skills around communicating about race, racism and culture in order to build support and engage partners. Throughout the ALC process, teams have developed strategies to take on as a part of this work. During the remainder of the project, which will conclude in February 2010, partnership staff and teams will evaluate their work and strategies and produce recommendations for communities looking to undo racism and decrease racial inequities for women of childbearing age. A final meeting with all six teams and the advisory group will be held February 1-3, 2010 in Memphis.

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## Healthy Start Funded at \$105 million in final appropriations bill

On December 16, 2009 President Obama signed into law a package of spending bills that provides \$446.8 billion to programs and agencies across the federal government, included in this bill was \$105 million for Healthy Start. This represents a \$2.6 million increase! The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant was flat-funded at the same amount as last year: \$662 million. The overall budget for the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at HRSA increased a modest \$10 million (this includes the \$2.6 million increase for Healthy Start).

Despite the increase for Healthy Start, there remains a tremendous amount of work to be done educating lawmakers and their staff about the importance of providing services and support to mothers and babies. NHTSA contacted members of the Appropriations Committee to thank them for the \$105 million, but also reinforced that additional funding is desperately needed to strengthen existing programs and expand services to eligible areas of the country.

## Health Reform

Health reform continues to inch closer to the President's desk. The House passed their version of the bill on November 7, 2009, and the Senate passed their version on December 24, 2009. Congressional leaders have expressed the desire to pass the final version of the bill before the president's State of the Union Address in late January.

NHTSA is pleased that both the House and Senate proposals contain a strong emphasis on preventive care and wellness. Both bills create massive new funding streams that will soon be available to strengthen and expand Healthy Start programs. As an example, the House bill proposes the creation of a Public Health Investment Fund along with the establishment of a Prevention and Wellness Trust. Among other things, these programs will provide billions of dollars in additional funding to support evidence-based community preventive and wellness programs, such as Healthy Start, that address significant health disparities. NHTSA will continue to update the membership as the health reform bill moves forward and additional information is available regarding the new funding opportunities.

## Healthy Start Visits ACF and HRSA

On December 7, 2009, NHTSA visited with officials at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), both within the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services. Representing NHTSA were Executive Director Stacey Cunningham, NHTSA Board President Cynthia Dean and Board Vice-President of Programs Estrellita "Lo" Berry.

At ACF, the group met with Dr. Joan Lombardi who serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary and as President Obama's point person on home visitation and efforts related to early childhood education. After Stacey provided an overview of Healthy Start and the role of NHTSA, Cynthia and Lo provided a summary of their respective programs and examples of how the positive impact Healthy Start has had on consumers. Dr. Lombardi was very pleased to learn more about Healthy Start and encouraged the group to focus time and attention on educating other federal officials about the work and impact of Healthy Start.

Stacey, Cynthia and Lo also spent time at HRSA meeting personally with Administrator Mary Wakefield. Dr. Wakefield has a strong focus on increasing agency efficiency and urged the group to let her know of any cross-agency partnerships that HRSA should pursue. Dr. Wakefield also emphasized the need to disseminate Healthy Start information more broadly. She wants to find ways that new audiences can learn from the Healthy Start network.

The meetings at ACF and HRSA were very productive and helped to better position the Healthy Start program within HHS. NHTSA will continue to work with offices and agencies across the federal government to ensure that Healthy Start is understood and supported.



From Left: Dr. Peter van Dyck, Maribeth Badura, Dr. Mary Wakefield, Lo Berry, Cynthia Dean, Stacey Cunningham



# RESEARCH NEWS – FAST FACTS & HOT STATS:

## THE SENATE APPROVES THE MIKULSKI AMENDMENT MAKING WOMEN'S PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

*"Health care is a women's issue, health care reform is a must-do women's issue and health insurance reform is a must-change women's issue. Women pay more for health insurance and get less. For far too long, many insurance companies have treated simply being a woman as a pre-existing condition. They've used every trick in the book to deny coverage to women. That's why I'm so proud the Senate passed the Mikulski Amendment. It guarantees access to preventative tests that save money and save women's lives."* Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)



On December 3, 2009, the United States Senate passed an amendment authored by U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) that guarantees women preventive health care screenings and care at no cost. It is the first amendment to The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act approved by the Senate (Mertens, 2009). This is wonderful news for advocates of preconception care!

Under the Mikulski Amendment, coverage will be based on comprehensive guidelines developed by experts in women's health and supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control (Senator Barbara Mikulski, 2009). These guidelines will include essential protections for women's access to preventive health care, such as coverage of cervical cancer screenings for a broad group of women, annual mammograms for women under 50, pregnancy and postpartum depression screenings, and screenings for domestic violence (Senator Barbara Mikulski, 2009)

Currently, more than half of American women report that they delay needed care due to cost (Mertens, 2009). The Mikulski Amendment guarantees that women of all ages will receive, at no cost, an annual women's health exam, which will include screenings for the leading causes of death for women (i.e. breast, cervical, ovarian and lung cancers, heart disease, and chronic illnesses such as diabetes). It also requires all health plans to cover comprehensive women's preventive care and screenings with no copayments (Mertens, 2009).

"Under my amendment, we are saying good-bye to an era when simply being a woman is treated as a pre-existing condition," Senator Mikulski said. "We are saying hello to an era where decisions about preventive care and screenings are made by a woman and her doctor-not by an insurance company, Members of Congress, or a stranger-and women are guaranteed preventive

screenings and care at no cost." (Senator Barbara Mikulski, 2009)

"This amendment is critical because women's health is fundamental to our country's health. It is of utmost importance that we make a real difference in the lives of American women, across their lifespan. Even in Minnesota - where we generally do a good job with health care - there are women in my state right now who are not getting the care they need. The reality is that if my wife or your sister doesn't have access to preventive services, that's bad for all of us-bad for our economy, bad for our country and bad for our future," said Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.), who has been a co-sponsor of the amendment (Herszenhorn & Pear, 2009).

"In the wake of the recent change in breast cancer screening guidelines by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, women all across the country are afraid and confused about whether their access to routine mammograms will be limited," said Jennifer Luray, president of the Komen Advocacy Alliance (Herszenhorn & Pear, 2009). "We are also concerned that at a time when one-third of women who qualify for screening today are not being screened due to a lack of access, education or awareness, that this confusion will drive more women away from screening. The Komen Advocacy Alliance is offering its support of Senator Mikulski's amendment, which will ensure that all women who need and want mammograms will be able to get them." (Herszenhorn & Pear, 2009). In the coming months, this amendment will certainly open doors for women across the nation who for so long have been neglected.

Thank you to Senator Barbara Mikulski for not giving up on her fight for comprehensive health care for ALL women. Senator Mikulski's website provides access to the [full text](#) of the amendment is available, as well as a [summary](#) and a [video](#) of Senator Mikulski on the Senate Floor.

### References:

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# HEALTHY START IN THE NEWS: HEALTHY START, INC. RECOGNIZES WORLD AIDS DAY 2009

On December 1, 2009, Healthy Start, Inc. - Allegheny County and Fayette County Projects joined others around the world in observing World AIDS Day 2009. In an effort to expand beyond improving the lives of families in Southwestern Pennsylvania, this year's activities focused primarily on addressing Pediatric AIDS in Africa. In addition to wearing red ribbons, staff members participated in various activities throughout the day to show support of children affected by the disease. The day began with a Pediatric AIDS awareness presentation, which included a brief overview of HIV/AIDS and prevention, history of World AIDS Day, and a look at data reflecting the global burden of HIV/AIDS. Realizing the disproportionate



burden of Pediatric AIDS in Africa, the staff collectively elected to play an active role in improving the lives of children, specifically orphans, impacted by HIV/AIDS and poverty. The staff collectively committed to send a regular financial contribution each month to the Orphans in Africa Project, located in Zimbabwe, Africa. In addition to this contribution, the remainder of the day was spent creating "100 Squares of Hope", which will serve as the foundation for a quilt to commemorate World AIDS Day 2009. This quilt will be displayed in a place of honor in the Healthy Start, Inc. Board Room. Healthy Start, Inc. realizes that there is much to be done in the fight against AIDS and will continue to demonstrate its support however possible.



## NHSA COMMUNICATES

The National Healthy Start Association is working to ensure the most widespread communications possible between our members, partners, consumers and the Association. Over the last 8 months, we've added new methods of communicating as well as updating some of the old.

Our website has undergone some construction, and we'll continue to improve upon it. The homepage now houses a calendar of events. On it, you will find not only NHSA activities, but also events occurring within Healthy Start communities and among partner organizations. We're constantly updating it, and we need your help to keep it current. So please continue to send us information about happenings in your community!

NHSA has ventured into the world of social media, and launched a blog in September to kick off National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, "Healthy from the Start." Topics and news stories focus on the health of women and children but also on the overall health of families in this country. We have used the blog to update partners and members on how NHSA is achieving its goals of reducing infant mortality and health disparities, specifically in minority communities and how you can play a role in ensuring there are healthy women, healthy children, and healthy communities. From policies to programs, the blog shares the work of Healthy Start

Projects from communities around the country to improve birth outcomes, reduce pre-term births, increase access to prenatal care, and eliminate domestic violence. There are 102 Healthy Start projects in 38 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico and the blog helps tell their stories. In addition to domestic issues, we also feel it is important to keep you informed on the global MCH issues facing women and children from international policy updates to a story on reduced maternal death rates in Sierra Leone.

For our Healthy Start Project Directors, we've created a Google Group. The Group allows project directors to communicate directly with each other. It's a method for them to share ideas, brainstorm and let one another know about achievements and news in their communities. In addition, documents can be posted to the Group for ease of access.

We are so thrilled about where these new avenues of communication will take us! We hope that you will join us on this journey as we effect change for the health of women, children, and families. Please reach out to us at [eperry@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:eperry@nationalhealthystart.org) with any questions, suggestions or feedback on all of our new ways to communicate.

**Family Road Healthy Start** held a Press Conference and Stroll-a-thon to kick off a month-long campaign to increase awareness of the high rate of infant mortality in East Baton Rouge Parish and in Louisiana. The Theme of the Campaign was “Let’s Get Rattled” in Remembrance of the 71 babies who did not reach their 1st birthday.



Community partners and Family Road Staff push strollers in Healthy Starts’ first Infant Mortality Awareness Campaign Stroll-a-thon.

**Indianapolis Healthy Start (IHS)** sponsored a Babies and Bellies Expo. Staff conducted Healthy Baby Bingo workshops in both English and Spanish, and staffed the IHS booth. There were over 2300 attendees and more than 70% were pregnant women.

**Voices of Appalachia Healthy Start** project tied miniature baby rattles with black ribbons and made them into lapel pins. Staff handed these out to local providers, consortium members, Health Department staff, and Healthy Start staff. The ribbons were worn for the entire month and when asked why, infant mortality and Healthy Start efforts to combat the problem were explained to individuals. It was really surprising to see how many people inquired about the pins and then took time to listen when staff gave an explanation. This happened at meetings, at the grocery store, doctors’ offices--anywhere staff went.

**Nashville Healthy Start** hosted its 1st Annual 1st-year Community Birthday Party for all of the babies in their target area who were or would be 1 in 2009. They packed the gym of a local community center with display tables from organizations or programs that work with toddlers who provided give-aways and great information. There was also had a beautiful baby contest with a professional photographer. All of their Healthy Start stakeholders were present and the Mayor signed a proclamation that Nashville will become the healthiest city in the state to be born.

**Cleveland MomsFirst Project** had a Happy, Healthy Babies Tour. The Tour hosted over 375 pregnant/parenting women, dads, grandparents and community members. 48 father/partners were in attendance. Partnering with the Cleveland Department of Public Health Nursing Department, 178 flu vaccinations were provided at one location. A total of 8 organizations participated in various events to educate the community on health related topics. Nearly 75% of the attendees were either pregnant or caring for a child under 2. There were over 240 calls to the MomsFirst Referral Line during September including 46 mentioning advertisements on Radio One in reference to the Tour.

**Twin Cities Healthy Start (TCHS)** celebrated its 10th anniversary with Mayor R.T. Rybak and Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman who proclaimed the day as Twin Cities Healthy Start Day. The mayors praised TCHS for its work in helping save the lives of children and millions of dollars in health care costs.

**Kansas City Healthy Start (KCHS)** program recognized the month by handing out education materials to 150 of their program participants with information on Eating Healthy, How Your Baby Grows, Drugs and Pregnancy, Newborn Care, etc. Each KCHS team member also received a booklet entitled “Words to Know” which is a glossary of terms so they can better understand “the language of pregnancy” in case any participants might have questions regarding words used by their healthcare provider during a check-up.

Consumers, partnering agencies, and Hillsborough County community lost 153 babies to infant mortality in 2007 and **REACHUP, Inc.** in partnership with **Hillsborough County Healthy Start Coalition** honored those babies and their families with an “un-birthday” party. The ceremony featured a birthday cake with candles with the numbers 153 symbolizing the birthday party the infants didn’t get to celebrate. The cake was surrounded by toys, which symbolized the playground these infants never had the chance to experience.

Florida Representative Betty Reed and Sonya Pridgen, a representative from Senator Arthenia Joyner’s office, were in attendance. The guest speaker for the “un-birthday” party



Cleveland MomsFirst Happy, Healthy Babies Tour

was photographer Jose Velez with the Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep Foundation, which offers compassionate, gentle and beautiful photography services to families who have lost their babies.

**Palmetto Healthy Start**, in collaboration with the March of Dimes South Carolina Chapter, Select Health of South Carolina, Inc. and Low Country Healthy Start held the third annual Heroes in the Field event. WLTX-TV anchorwoman Darci Strickland was the mistress of ceremonies and Bryan Ohning, MD, Greenville Hospital System, was the guest speaker. Honorees were recognized for their significant contributions to reduce the incidence of infant mortality in South Carolina.



St. Louis and Missouri Bootheel Healthy Start project members with Missouri Governor Jay Nixon.

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## February

- **National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM).** Each February, the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. NCDHM messages and materials have reached millions of people in communities across the country. For resources, publications and events, visit <http://www.ada.org/prof/events/featured/ncdhm.asp>.
- **3-15:** Texas Healthy Start Alliance Education Conference at the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Houston, Texas. Nursing and Social Work CEUs will be provided.
  - o The Texas Healthy Start Alliance (TXHSA) is a collaboration of federally-funded HRSA Healthy Start Programs and consists of six sites: Brownsville, Dallas, Fort Worth, Laredo, San Antonio and Houston Healthy Start Program. The Texas Healthy Start Alliance was organized exclusively for the purpose of addressing community-based maternal and child health issues focusing on promoting healthy lifestyles for women of childbearing age, maximizing participation in prenatal care, reduction of infant mortality, low birth weight, racial, ethnic and border area specific disparities in perinatal outcomes. The members of the Texas Healthy Start Alliance share the vision, "To sustain, support and grow Healthy Start Programs within the State of Texas." The mission of TXHSA is to collaborate with others to promote healthy families and communities in the State of Texas through education, advocacy, capacity-building, and research.
  - o To learn more about the Texas Healthy Start Alliance and the Alliance Education Conference, please visit <http://www.txhsa.com/>.

## March

- **6-10:** Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Annual Conference, Moving Ahead Together: Celebrating the Legacy, Shaping the Future of Maternal and Child Health. The conference will be held at the Gaylord National Hotel and Convention Center in National Harbor, MD.
  - o The goal of the 2010 AMCHP Conference is to advance the health of women, children and families by promoting innovations in MCH policy and programs, sharing best practices, developing state MCH leadership, and fostering multidisciplinary approaches to address key health issues impacting MCH.
  - o For more information, please visit <http://www.amchp.org/Events/amchp-conference/Pages/default.aspx>.
- **13-14:** Healthy Start Leadership Training Institute, Hyatt Regency Washington, Washington, DC
- **14-17:** National Healthy Start 11th Annual Spring Conference, Fulfilling Our Vision: Healthy Babies from the Start. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. Please visit our conference website for more information <http://www.healthystartassoc.org/hprogram.html>.

## April

- **26-28:** National Oral Health Conference, St. Louis, Missouri. More detailed information on the schedule of events to come. Please visit the website [http://www.nationaloralhealthconference.com/index.php?page=upcoming\\_events](http://www.nationaloralhealthconference.com/index.php?page=upcoming_events). If you are interested in exhibiting at the conference, visit <http://www.nationaloralhealthconference.com/docs/2010-nohc-exhibitors-prospectus.pdf> for more information.