



NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION

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**Healthy Start
Turns 30 in 2021:
Series Continues
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**Next Month in
*Getting off to a
Healthy Start:***

We HOPE to
introduce you to our
new website and
some of the cool
functions for the
Healthy Start
Projects. Fingers
crossed!



Women's History Month and Social Work Month

Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to Be Silenced

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first proclamation for National Women's History Week, a tradition carried on by presidents until 1987, when Congress passed Public Law 100-9, designating March as Women's History Month. Between 1994 and 1998, Congress requested and authorized the president to proclaim March as Women's History Month. Since 1995, each president has issued annual proclamations designating March as Women's History Month.

The theme for 2021 is *Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to Be Silenced*. This extends the 2020 theme celebrating 100 years of the women's suffrage movement and achieving women's right to vote.

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s 2021 Presidential Proclamation notes that, "In our current moment of crisis, women continue to lead...women are working around the clock to defeat COVID-19. Women, and particularly women of color, also make up the majority of America's essential workers...who are keeping our families, our communities and our country afloat. This year has also marked an historic milestone of women's leadership 232 years in the making with the inauguration of America's first woman Vice President."

There are many ways to celebrate Women's History Month and a great place to get started is www.WomensHistoryMonth.gov. A commentary in the *Baltimore Sun* suggests, "Really celebrate Women's History Month: Certify the Equal Rights Amendment." The author quotes Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg: "I would like my granddaughters when they pick up the U.S. Constitution to see that...women and men are persons of equal stature. I'd like them to see that as a basic principle of our society."

March is National Social Work Month



Celebrated each March to honor the contributions of social workers, this year's theme is *Social Workers are Essential*. Social workers have always been essential, but now, and this past year, perhaps more so than ever. Says the president of the National Association of Social Workers, Mildred "Mit" Joyner, DPS, MSW, LCSW, in *The New Social Worker*, "As we celebrate Social Work Month 2021 and this year's theme...it is important to reaffirm our profession's role in examining the soul of our nation and ensuring our country evolves to benefit all its residents.

"Over the past year, we have coped with a pandemic that has killed a half million in the United States and resulted in an economic downturn that has left millions of people without jobs. And the deaths of hundreds of Black people at the hands of police and vigilantes – including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless others – show that racism continues to fester in our nation, affecting all institutions.

"Our nation is politically divided, and we often disagree on what is truth and reality. There are days it seems like we may never find common ground. But I believe, based on our profession's history, values and strengths, social workers will play a key role in helping our nation heal...social workers, as members of a proud and essential profession...have the knowledge, talent and skills to help our nation live up to its best ideals – freedom and liberation for all."

Fun Fact: There are an estimated **700,000** social workers in the United States as of 2018. (And many are Healthy Start Project Directors!) The total number of jobs is expected to grow 11% over the next decade, significantly faster than the overall job market's growth.

Getting off to a Healthy Start

Healthy Start Turns 30 in 2021: NHSA's Series Celebrating 30 Years of Healthy Start Continues

Each issue in 2021, NHSA is finding a way to honor this important milestone. This month, letters from two NHSA presidents!

Healthy Start: A 30-Year Battle to End Inequality

Congratulations, Healthy Start Family! The task has been hard and the progress slow, but Healthy Start has survived and remains the conscience for health equity. It began as a Presidential initiative with the task to reduce infant mortality by 50% in 15 selected communities. Major allocations of funding were awarded in a competitive process that required a five-year plan identifying innovation with results. To redesign a health care system of inclusion and to commit resources to forgotten communities was a vision worth extreme efforts. Ambitious and difficult, but a low infant mortality rate is the standard for a nation's quality of life. In 1990, infant mortality, a measure of a society's well-being, identified the United States in a position far below other nations.

Has this world low position changed? There has been some improvement in our world ranking, but a two-fold differential in race-specific birth outcomes remains unacceptable. We have not yet eliminated the causes of these differences. A review of global models may provide additional perspectives for new learning and offer insights for a fresh start.

The original Project Directors understood the need for a longer timeline, beyond the demonstration phase, to solve this long and shameful inequality. In addition, we recognized the importance of funding security, maintenance of initial investments and the power of growth. The policy view, to replicate effective models and expand to additional communities, although controversial, was strategic to advance and sustain progress. This foresight to educate and advocate became the rationale for the formation of the National Healthy Start Association. The Association has been a key reason why Healthy Start has remained a community force for 30 years and a catalyst for health and economic reform.

What more will it take to remove the stigma and effects of inequality? Social justice together with a rebuilt public health system are needed solutions.

- Is it possible for Healthy Start to lead with new purpose, reflecting on successes and mistakes?
- Do the core principals remain relevant in this changing world?
- Does it require new plans, operational cooperatives, strategic alliances and innovation?

Healthy Start's role over the past 30 years to end inequality has made a difference. Truth and compassion will continue to guide this mission, that sadly is not yet finished.

Thank you for your significant efforts. I am grateful for my role from the beginning and throughout many years in the Healthy Start movement and remain grateful for yours.

Carol Synkewcz (Ms. Synkewcz was NHSA's first president and the first project director for Allegheny County/Pittsburgh Healthy Start, one of the original 15 Healthy Start grantees.)



Carol Synkewcz being greeted by President George H.W. Bush at the 1991 Rose Garden Ceremony announcing the Healthy Start Initiative.



Carol today.

Happy 30th Birthday, Healthy Start!



Raynard Washington

Turning 30 is such a critical time in one's life. It's often full of new beginnings, largely driven by lessons learned over the years. Healthy Start's 30th Birthday is not much different! We've come a long way as a program – from serving a humble 15 communities during the early years to now over 100 communities today and closer to 200 through the years. ***What a journey it has been!***

Much like life, we must take this exciting and remarkable moment to celebrate our success, as well as, reflect on the lessons learned in preparation for our future. Healthy Start has valiantly navigated some of the most challenging community, social, and political barriers in communities, states, and across this nation. Since the demonstration phase, our programs have served as vehicles for consumer voices and transformed communities by not just amplifying the consumer's voice but *listening to it*. No doubt, the credit for our progress toward closing gaps in birth, maternal and family outcomes and achieving greater equity in public health and health care systems goes to our consumers. It is that distinction that we must remain committed to as we move forward.

And forward we must go. While we've made significant progress, racial inequities in child, maternal and family outcomes persist. Healthy Start is a critical, trusted, and effective tool in our work against injustice in health care and public health.

Congratulations to each of you on 30 impactful years of service to our communities' most vulnerable!

Raynard Washington, PhD, MPH

President, NHSA Board of Directors (Dr. Washington was the evaluator for the Healthy Start project in Pittsburgh at one time.)

Research News: **Hot Stats and Fast Facts**

March 2021

To Reduce Child Poverty, Increase Family Incomes

A recent paper from Child Trends begins by saying, “Children are more likely to live in poverty than any other age group in the United States.” A stunning 12 million children lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty level in 2019 (before the pandemic). Another 15 million lived in families that were perilously close to slipping into poverty.

“Fortunately,” continue the authors, “there is a proven, straightforward way to significantly reduce the percentage of children in poverty and provide a buffer for families at risk of becoming poor: increase the income of families raising children.” Money not only allows families to meet their children’s basic needs, but it matters in other less obvious ways:

- Money provides the resources to support early brain development.
- Having an adequate income allows parents to make supportive and preventive investments in their children.
- Money can give parents time with and for their kids.
- A child benefit paid on a monthly basis can support parental employment.
- Secure, stable income reduces parental stress and promotes children’s well-being.
- Money may help level the playing field for many children of color.

Source: [To reduce child poverty, increase family incomes](#), Child Trends, 02/24/21.

Bilingual Baby Brains

An update from *Positive Parenting Newsfeed* reports on a research scientist’s measurements of brain waves of 11-month-olds. Naja Ferjan Ramirez, PhD, found that bilingual babies showed responses to both languages and had stronger brain responses in areas responsible for executive function. She noted that “experiencing a second language during infancy and early childhood helps children develop native-like fluency.”

Source: [Update: Bilingual Baby Brains](#), Positive Parenting Newsfeed, 02/16/21 (clicking the link will allow you to watch an interview of Dr. Ramirez; see also [University of Washington study builds upon UTSA bilingual baby research](#), 08/30/2011; image credit: UTSA Today).



Baby wearing a cap to measure EEG or brainwaves.

7 Ways to Reduce Infant Mortality

1. Improve access to quality prenatal care.
2. Reduce teen pregnancy rates.
3. Decrease the number of preterm births.
4. Encourage breastfeeding.
5. Decrease SIDS risk factors.
6. Eliminate environmental hazards.
7. Improve parent self-care.

Source: [7 Ways to Reduce Infant Mortality](#), DrPrem.com, 12/06/14.

Racism Declared a Public Health Issue. Now What?

On May 29, 2020, a [statement](#) from American Public Health Association (APHA) President Georges Benjamin said, “Racism attacks people’s physical and mental health. And racism is an ongoing public health crisis that needs our attention now...We see discrimination every day in all aspects of life, including housing, education, the criminal justice system and employment. And it is amplified during this pandemic as communities of color face inequities in everything from a greater burden of COVID-19 cases to less access to testing, treatment and care.”

CNN reported on June 1, 2020, that several doctors’ groups – the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and American College of Physicians – were emphasizing that racism is a public health issue and that police brutality must stop. The American College of Physicians named hate crimes as a public health issue in a 2017 [statement](#). “Several studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems, including [depression](#), [cardiovascular disease](#), [hypertension](#) -- more than 40% of black adults have high blood pressure -- and even [death](#),” continued the [CNN Health article](#).

According to [Phys.org](#), racism has been declared a public health issue in 145 cities and counties across 27 states. That was on November 24, 2020. The APHA has an [interactive map](#) that shows 185 declarations: eight by states, 104 by cities and 73 counties. But Phys.org goes on to ask, “Now what happens?”

“I really hope that these efforts are met by significant resources and significant willingness to be able to share power,” said Tiffany Green, assistant professor of population health sciences at the University of Wisconsin. “There are also examples of ‘explicit racial stereotyping used in medical care,’ ” Green said, who studies racial disparities in maternal and child health and “has seen disparities in C-sections, for example.”

Declarations need to be followed up with action and funding. State three students in an op-ed published on February 13, 2021 by [MedPageToday](#), “Yet as we sat in our October medical school Zoom session discussing racial health disparities with our classmates, many of us noted that once more the connection between racism and health had been proclaimed with no follow-up actions.” They propose the following actions for governments at all levels:

- Pass the [Anti-Racism in Public Health Act of 2020](#).
- Increase federal research dollars.
- Prioritize Black medical students.
- Close COVID-19 disparities.

Getting off to a Healthy Start

Resources You Can Use!

Where Black Families Can Find Black Pregnancy, Birth & Breastfeeding Professionals

From [Lamaze International](#): "One way to improve health outcomes for Black families around the time of birth is for Black parents/families to work with Black perinatal professionals, including physicians, midwives, OB/gyns, doulas, and breastfeeding support professionals. A 2020 study called "Physician-patient racial concordance and disparities in birthing mortality for newborns" (Greenwood, et. al., 2020) found that when Black families see Black physicians, there is a significant improvement in health outcomes for Black babies.

"The following links provide several directories of Black perinatal professionals throughout the United States. If you are unable to find a provider in your area through these links, search for an organization that refers and promotes Black perinatal professionals in your area. Local Black community organizations will likely know of Black midwives, doulas, OBs, and lactation consultants in your area. And of course, be sure to talk with your friends and family first for recommendations!"

Directories of Black Perinatal Health Professionals

- Find a **Black doula** on the [National Black Doulas Association](#) directory.
- Find a **Black physician**, including an OB/Gyn, on the [BlackDoctor.org](#) directory.
- Find a **Black doula or midwife** on the [Sista Midwife Productions](#) directory.
- Find a **Black breastfeeding professional/lactation consultant** on the [National Association of Professional and Peer Lactation Supporters of Color](#) directory.
- Find a **Black therapist** on the [Therapy for Black Girls](#) or [Black Therapists Rock](#) directories.



MotherToBaby Has a New, Mobile-Friendly Website

In October 2020, MotherToBaby retired their MotherToBaby app and launched a new website. With the app no longer being supported, MotherToBaby says the new website provides overview pages for pregnant women with selected resources and topics, fact sheets, pregnancy studies, "Ask an Expert an Exposure Question," a baby blog, podcast and more. Click [here](#) to visit the site.

Office on Women's Health Offers Women's Health on Twitter in Spanish



Image Credit: OWH Twitter feed en Español

Sample of a recent tweet: ALERTA DE SALUD PÚBLICA: Se aconseja a los padres y cuidadores que no preparen ni alimenten a los bebés con fórmula casera debido a problemas graves de salud e inocuidad, incluyendo contaminación, ausencia o cantidades inadecuadas de nutrientes críticos. <https://go.usa.gov/xskj3> (FDA Advises Parents and Caregivers to Not Make or Feed Homemade Infant Formula to Infants) Click [here](#) to go to the OWH En Español site to see everything they have to offer in Spanish.

MCH Navigator Has Three New Resources

Visit the MCH Navigator site for trainings and resources. The Navigator provides "competency-based learning to accelerate MCH upstream together to improve the health of infants, children, youth, and families." Here are three new offerings:

- New: [COVID-19 Competency-Based Learning Resource](#)
- New: [MCH 20|20 Microlearning Program](#)
- New: [MCH History: Title V @ 85](#)

Have You Signed Up For the *Pregnancy & Baby Bulletin* from WebMD Yet?

Here are just a few topics covered recently. Click [here](#), then scroll down to subscribe.

- The Miracle of Conception in Pictures (See what happens when the sperm fertilizes the egg.)
- Breastfeeding vs. Formula Feeding (Everyone has an opinion!)
- Is Your Newborn Normal? (We all worry about that, right?)
- Serious Signs of Preeclampsia (When to call the doctor.)



Central Oklahoma Healthy Start Initiative Father of the Year

The mission of the Central Oklahoma Healthy Start initiative's Fatherhood Program is to help fathers understand their role. The Fatherhood Program's scope includes connecting fathers to employment, counseling, education, legal, health and local social service resources. They offer a 12-session bi-weekly virtual parenting class for all fathers who request support around parenting skills. In the Spring of 2021, the Central Oklahoma Healthy Start Fatherhood Program will pilot a series of workshops as well as host their annual Fishing with Dads event.

Several outstanding fathers enrolled in the Central Oklahoma Healthy Start Fatherhood Program this year. However, Paul Cumberbatch stood out above all the participants. "We have provided fatherhood services for Paul, who has been committed to the fatherhood program since he arrived a year ago," wrote Wesley Foster, Fatherhood Coordinator. "Paul supports and attends all prenatal visits with his wife. He has completed parenting classes offered in the Healthy Start Fatherhood Program. Above all, Paul has an open mind, a positive attitude and a willingness to learn. It gives great pleasure to recognize Paul Cumberbatch as the Central Oklahoma Healthy Start Father of the Year recipient."

During the award ceremony, Wesley posed the following four questions. Paul's responses are noted below.

Question 1. What do you think of the Healthy Start program? I think that the Healthy Start Program is a very useful tool by which young men are able to be taught positive principles, concepts and ideas about fatherhood, which would allow them to make a positive impact on their family, community and world.

I do think that many of the skills learned, taught and reinforced in the Healthy Start Fatherhood Program, such as skills on manners, healthy and unhealthy relationships, conflict resolution and communication, are necessary because many fathers do not learn about these topics while growing up. Although I grew up in a Christian home, I did not know about manners, healthy and unhealthy relationships, conflict resolution, communication and fatherhood until I entered the Central Oklahoma Healthy Start fatherhood program. I have learned a lot about myself while in the fatherhood program. It is my hope that this fatherhood program continues to be available for young men and fathers so that they can become good husbands and fathers.

Question 2. What is your opinion of the fatherhood program? I think that the Fatherhood program is very meaningful and useful to young men who may have never met their biological father. The Fatherhood program is filling a void that exists in society today for good positive male role models. Further, a father is someone who provides monetary support and can lend a helping hand in nurturing his children. The burden of raising children alone is too big for young ladies to carry, especially when many of our young men are absent by choice in prison.

Question 3. How has the fatherhood session helped, impacted or been beneficial for you? The fatherhood sessions have helped me become a better father to my two young daughters. I have learned and attempt to pass on only the positive qualities that will enhance their lives and make a positive contribution long after I am no longer here. The fatherhood sessions have also allowed me to understand other young father's perspectives in my community. In fact, many young fathers are facing similar circumstances and making decisions that affect their children positively and negatively. We need to be an example for the next generation.

Question 4. Would you recommend this program to others? I would definitely recommend this program to other young men of all ages for several reasons. If a new father were to go through this fatherhood program, they would be better prepared to be a good father. I know many dads who grew up without a father and didn't want to repeat that cycle. Mr. Wesley can teach a father how to be responsible, positive and involved in their kids' life. I wish we could put this program into a high school curriculum to prepare young men before becoming a father.

Check Out This Fatherhood Newsletter!

Click [here](#) for the link to the Strong Beginnings Healthy Start Strong Fathers/Padres Fuertes Newsletter for March 2021.

As a Father of the Year recipient, Paul received a 24/7 Dad Certificate of Completion, a \$50 Visa gift card, fatherhood T-Shirt and mug donated from our faith-based fatherhood coalition, a member of Disciples of Christ Ministries.

In the Spotlight



Paul with his Father of the Year awards and gifts.

Getting off to a Healthy Start

Strong Beginnings Healthy Start (Grand Rapids) Helps Michigan Allies Win New Executive Order

Writes Peggy Vander Meulen, Project Director, about the following article on the [Alliance for Early Success](#) website, "We've been involved in this work on several levels:

- I'm a member of MCMCH (Michigan Council for Maternal Child Health - statewide advocacy group that led a lot of this work)
- Celeste Sanchez Lloyd is on the MCMCH Birth Equity Committee
- Celeste was invited to be part of Governor Whitmer's Racial Disparities Task Force (and three subcommittees) which was responsible for Governor Whitmer to issue the mandatory annual implicit bias training for all health care providers (even veterinarians!) and for the governor declaring racism a public health crisis (she's also on the Governor's Latino Commission)
- Denise Evans served on the Governor's committee that created the IB curriculum
- I'm on the state Maternal Infant Health Equity Action Committee working on policies such as extending postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months

"We are truly blessed to have such a strong and progressive Governor!"

Michigan Allies Win New Executive Orders – and a \$23-Million Investment – to Address Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

February 25, 2021: Our Allies in Michigan – led by the [Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health](#) (MCMCH) – have been working hard to highlight racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes and to build urgency around the need to achieve birth equity. Last year, their work with the governor and legislature paid off with several crucial wins, including \$23.5 million in funding for a comprehensive plan to address disparities and an executive order that requires health professionals to undergo implicit bias training.



In late 2019, advocates met with Governor Gretchen Whitmer to sound the alarm around racial disparities in birth outcomes, and they were excited to hear in the governor's 2020 State of the State address a call to "acknowledge and address health disparities." The Governor followed her call to action with a "Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies" budget proposal that included a series of investments to improve maternal health, and recognized the importance of implicit bias training for health professionals.

The impacts of COVID 19 reinforced the need for implicit bias training, and on July 9, 2020, Governor Whitmer issued an Executive Order [requiring all health professionals to undergo implicit bias training](#) to obtain or renew their licenses. The new rule is scheduled to take effect in mid-2021. Governor Whitmer also voiced her support for the incorporation of implicit bias training into university and medical curriculum to reduce racial disparities in the health care system.

When the 2021 budget was approved, it also had big wins for reducing infant mortality rates and addressing the racial disparity that exists in care provided to expectant mothers and their babies. It included an additional \$23.5 million dedicated to extending Medicaid coverage to pregnant women for 12 months after giving birth, 500 new home visiting slots and support for cross-agency home visiting infrastructure, and expanded behavioral health services for pregnant/postpartum women and new families.

"It's crucial that we change the systems and communities where racism and other underlying social determinants of health are deeply rooted," says Amy Zaagman, executive director of MCMCH. "Thanks to the hard work of Michigan advocates – and the tools, resources, and connections we get through the Alliance – Michigan took some very significant steps forward this year."

Congratulations to Peggy and her team for the role they played in making this happen!

Heart of Georgia Healthy Start Has a New Address

Heart of Georgia Healthy Start has moved to a new location. They are now housed at 904A Hillcrest Parkway, Dublin GA 31021.

"We are excited about all the things we will be able to accomplish at our new site," says Chelsie Crawford, Case Management Supervisor.



March 2021

What's Going on at the Healthy Start Projects? Let's Take a Look!

Five Rivers Healthy Start (Dayton, OH) →

Five Rivers Healthy Start would normally hold a large group graduation and take tons of pictures, play with the kids and eat. We still wanted to celebrate our families for their hard work and commitment to the program. This year, we decided to hold drive-by graduations. The Community Health Workers delivered their graduation gifts. We celebrated each family with a cupcake, certificate, Healthy Start Mom Pin and Leappad for the child.



Family Tree Healthy Start (Lafayette, LA)

In the Spotlight



Family Tree's *Mom of the Month* is Karrel Jones. She was nominated by case manager Sydney Sias, who said, "Karrel Jones has been in the program since 2018. I have had the pleasure of working with her since September 2020. Her daughter Emily is 11 months old. Her son Macoy, who is now 24 months, was in the program in the past. She also has two other kids as well, Jakhavien, who is seven years old, and Kyliegh, who is five years old. Karrel is the definition of a super mom. She works seven days a week, and never has a day off to relax or honestly just a take a breather. Between taking care of her children she also has never missed a beat with any of our calls and visits. She loves learning and trying new nurturing parenting techniques to establish and start in her family. She has such a loving and kind spirit. Her mantra on life is 'Hard days will not last forever. I just have to keep pushing.' I am so proud of Karrel for always being optimistic and even through the hard days, she still maintains a smile through it all! I am so thankful she is in this program, and I wish nothing but the best for her and her family."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Third Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m. ET: NHSA Fatherhood Practitioners Webinars. Make sure we have your Fatherhood Coordinators' name and email address. Send to [Hida Reese](#) and copy [Bea Haskins](#).

Getting off to a Healthy Start

More Healthy Start Projects and Their Activities!

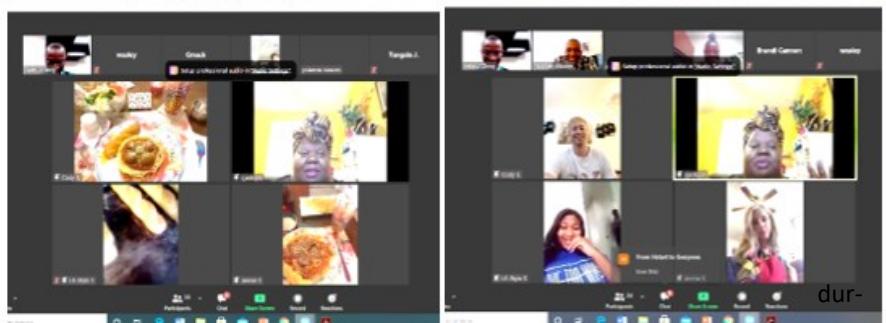
Community Service Council Healthy Start (Tulsa, OK)

The Community Service Council (CSC) Healthy Start Program debuted our 1st Annual Healthy Virtual Cooking Competition on March 10, 2020. The cooking completion objective was to promote healthy eating practices and create a healthy meal option for our Healthy Start families. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSC Healthy Start Program relied solely on a virtual format for a safe and creative approach to host the cooking competition.

Preparation for the Healthy Cooking Competition consisted of selecting four committed Healthy Start families to participate in the cooking competition. Due to an unforeseen medical condition, the fourth family could not join in the cooking competition. Next, the three Healthy Start families selected attended a meeting to discuss what to expect during the cooking competition. Because of scheduling conflicts, the event coordinator, Tangela Johnson, had to make several adjustments. For instance, program participants who could not attend all meetings were emailed a virtual recording of the session to inform them what to expect during the competition. Further, each of the program participants who competed in the cooking competition was given instructions on using either a laptop computer camera or cell phone camera during the match.

The virtual audience included, but was not limited to the Healthy Start Staff, Central Oklahoma Healthy Start, New Haven (CT) Healthy Start, The Family Tree Information, Education & Counseling Center – Healthy Start (LA), Community Service Council staff and community partner Health & Safety Education Consultants, Training Center, LLC. To make the cooking competition more interactive, viewers were permitted to ask questions both verbally and via chat throughout the competition. On the cooking competition day, program participants were given 45 minutes to complete the competition meal, which was spaghetti. Participants were given ingredients for spaghetti, salad and garlic bread. Each family was given an option of selecting the elements of their choice to provide them with a competitive edge for winning the cooking competition. For example, some participants preferred preparing a garden salad rather than Caesar salad. Other participants used shrimp and sausage rather than ground beef.

Once the 45-minute clock expired, the judges deliberated for approximately 10 minutes before the winners were announced to the event coordinator. Judges scored each meal using a Likert scale scoring sheet on a scale of 1 – 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest score. The criteria by which each judge scored program participants' meals were on creativity and meal presentation. The CSC Healthy Start 1st Annual Virtual Healthy Cooking Competition winners were: 1st place winners were Cody Still and Marissa Brewer (center above), 2nd place winner was Jennie Stilton (left) and 3rd place winner was Shaquisha Jenkins and Marquez Guess (right). The first-place prize was a \$100 Visa gift card, second-place was a \$75 dollar Visa gift card and the third-place prize was a \$50 Visa gift card. Program participants also received new cookware, groceries, an apron and chef hat and a *My Plate* cooking book for participating in the cooking competition.



Winners shown on the top row. Screen shots of the competition on the bottom row.



Reminder: Advocacy is a year-round project. Take every opportunity you have to educate your Members of Congress, as well as your **state and local legislators**. Invite them to your events, including virtual ones like the ones described in this issue. Take photos. Send them the NHSA newsletter when their photo appears; they love seeing that!

March 2021

Projects' Activities, continued | Consumer Spotlights

Midlands Healthy Start (Columbia, SC)



Photo from the Dental Health Class

On February 17, 2021, in honor of **Children's Dental Health Month**, Midlands Healthy Start (MHS) hosted a Monthly Focus class on dental health. The class provided information on the importance of mother's caring for their own teeth before, during and after pregnancy. MHS also provided education on children's dental health and tips/tricks for brushing children's teeth. One of our participants shared that she learned that even while a child is an infant she can positively impact her children's dental health. MHS's outreach team also delivered dental health bags to our participants to encourage good dental health for the whole family!

On February 25, 2021, MHS hosted our **Monthly Breastfeeding Support Group**. This month, we focused on breastfeeding moms returning to work and the legal rights they have to pump while at work in a safe, clean area. We discovered that many of our participants were not aware of these rights and left the group feeling more empowered to continue their breastfeeding journey! One participant shared that "having the support group meetings makes me feel like I am part of a community and even though I've felt alone in some of my breastfeeding struggles, I've been able to talk to and hear from other moms who are going through the same things."



The Magnolia Project (Jacksonville, FL)

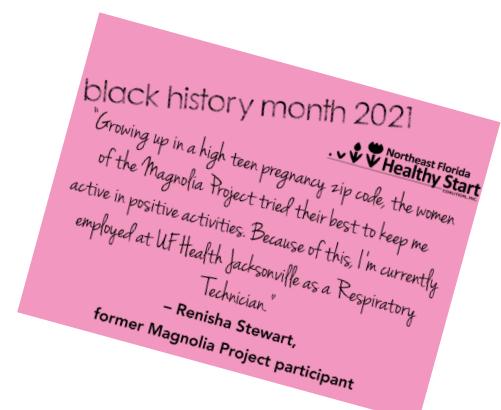
We want to recognize and celebrate Black History Month, which was created to commemorate the contributions to our nation made by people of African descent. As part of the celebration, we want to highlight former Magnolia Project participant Renisha Stewart, who is history in the making! Renisha has been an advocate and a volunteer, and is pursuing a career as a respiratory technician. She is currently heading a Magnolia Project Community Council to engage teens and women like her in services!

I joined the [Magnolia Project](#) at the age of 13. After completing high school and beginning college, I was able to still receive clinic services and participate in weekly meetings due to the assistance from my case manager.

I graduated from the 16-week [Leadership Academy](#) training class, nominated by my case manager who also helped me to accomplish my goals. I had the honor to advocate for funding in Washington D.C. and in Tallahassee, FL. with board member Rev. Tommy Rodgers, then Magnolia Project Director Faye Johnson (now CEO) and then Executive Director Jennifer Gornto. The experience was priceless.

During that time, I volunteered for many years for the March of Dimes, participated in several of the fundraising walks and National Women's Health week, sharing my story with state representatives Corrine Brown and Mia Jones.

Growing up in a high teen pregnancy zip code, the women of the Magnolia Project TRIED THEIR BEST to keep me active in positive activities and because of this, I'm currently employed at UF Health Jacksonville as a Respiratory Technician for three years. I am also excited to give back and help the Magnolia Project by leading their community council!



Getting off to a Healthy Start

Healthy Start in the News!



Alameda County Healthy Start Initiative Builds Partnerships to Offer Black Families the "Gold-package" of Prenatal Support and Care

Alameda County's Healthy Start Initiative (ACHSI) released its BE/lovedBIRTH Black Centering 2020 Impact report detailing local efforts and initiatives to build a culturally concordant system of care for expectant Black families. While sheltering-in-place in the midst of a global pandemic, ACHSI, in partnership with Alameda Health System – Highland Hospital, launched BE/lovedBIRTH Black Centering, a 15-session group prenatal care program adapted from the CenteringPregnancy model. After two years of planning and overcoming hurdles rooted in structural racism, the first two cohorts of pregnant African American clients participated in virtual group prenatal care sessions.

The program's reception has been very positive among participants and has leveraged the support of several new collaborators to underwrite additional services and resources. For example, BelovedBIRTH participants receive a weekly prepared nutritious meal delivery service during the six-week postpartum period. ACHSI uses Healthy Start dollars as well as California's Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI) dollars to directly fund the Black-centric CenteringPregnancy prenatal groups.

In February 2021, Alameda County's PEI expanded this system of care through the soft launch of the Black Doula Access Program and Community Black Doula Training Program. This soft launch was attended by seventy community members, doulas, birthworkers, hospital providers and organizers interested in Alameda County Public Health Department's doula program. These services are part of the statewide PEI focused on reducing maternal/parental and infant mortality and morbidity for Black families in California, who face a disproportionate burden of negative health outcomes primarily due to racism. The Black Doula Access Program will provide experienced, trauma-informed and culturally competent doulas to Black birthing people and Doula support services to expectant Black families, as well.

BElovedBIRTH's 2020 Impact Report can be accessed online at ACHSI's EmbraceHer website at <https://embraceher.info/about-us>. Additional recent information in the press about our programming is available as follows:

Black newborns and moms in Oakland need more support. These East Bay birth workers are here to help

https://oaklandsid.org/2021/03/01/beloved-birth-black-centering-oakland-alameda-maternal-health/?utm_source=Oaklandsid%20master%20list&utm_campaign=35de3ced83-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_03_01_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8612bcc0f3-35de3ced83-333526178&fbclid=IwAR3X2JQ4I-g5iDoKgSkG1TuZkIkcvP8wQ0_9w5_dflkP1XWU6kbHjtNIMpA

Transforming the Pregnancy Experience for Black Mothers

https://www.kron4.com/video/transforming-the-pregnancy-experience-for-black-mothers/6390251/?fbclid=IwAR0rdp3_A5zIUzR9xJL4D_QUvHiKxKEVjjFYdZVcvMzdkPtZF-U6dqPUhu4

One More Healthy Start Projects' Activities (it was a late arrival!)

Piedmont Health Services and Sickle Cell Agency (Greensboro, NC)



Piedmont Health Services
and Sickle Cell Agency

Below is the link to Piedmont Health Services and Sickle Cell Agency's first day of celebration in recognition of the National Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of HIV/AIDS.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCq2FqOExPk>

By the Way: We only received one submission for the NHSA Cookie Recipe Exchange Book – so there won't be a book. Your editor is very sad about this.

Send Us Your Stuff!

Send us your stories and photos by the 6th of each month for inclusion in *Getting off to a Healthy Start*. Send to [Bea Haskins](#).

March 2021

Stay Connected with NHSA on social media!



Attention Healthy Start Project Directors and Program Staff!

Newsletters

- Be sure to include NHSA in your newsletter distribution list so we can include your news in *Getting off to a Healthy Start!* Please add Bea Haskins, Communications Coordinator and our newsletter editor, bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org.
- Do you have project staff you'd like to be on *our* distribution list? Send their name, title and email address to Bea so she can add them!
- Make sure we have your Fatherhood Coordinator's name and email address, too!
- Not a Healthy Start Project? That's OK! Let us know if you want to add someone to our distribution list.

Photos, Stories and More

- Send us photos and news stories from your events for inclusion in the next issue of *Getting off to a Healthy Start!*
- Examples of events: baby showers, educational forums or CAN meetings.
- And remember to invite your elected officials – federal, state and local – to your events and be sure to take pictures of them!
- Don't forget your consumer success stories!
- The deadline is the 6th of each month.
- Send everything to **Bea Haskins**.

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The National Healthy Start Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The mission of the NHSA is to be our nation's voice in providing leadership and advocacy for health equity services and interventions that improve birth outcomes and family well-being.

Newsletter Editor: Bea Haskins, Communications Coordinator | **Contributing Writers:** Healthy Start Projects' Staff; **Photo Credits:** Thank you to the Healthy Start projects that sent in photos used in this issue! Shutterstock photos are used under agreement.

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