

Getting off to a *Healthy Start*



A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION, INC.

Summer 2006

Spring Conference Celebrated Healthy Start's Past, Present and Future

With the theme of *Healthy Start: Celebrating Our Past, Present and Future*, the NHSA honored its founders during the Seventh Annual Spring Conference and looked to future activities planned by the Association. It recognized important individuals in the development and implementation of the Healthy Start initiative and examined lessons learned from present programs and recent research.

Nearly 400 members of the Healthy Start family, including 85 consumers, and representing almost

90% of the Healthy Start projects, attended this year's conference, held for the first time at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, March 26-29. The keynote address was offered by Vijaya Hogan of the University of North Carolina's Schools of Medicine and Public Health. Speaking on social and environmental factors and disparities in perinatal outcomes, she told participants that Healthy Start "is in a good position to develop the evidence base" to address those disparities. Dr. Hogan noted that Healthy Start needs to conduct community

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Regional Conferences Showcase Diversity in Positive Light

As *Getting off to a Healthy Start* goes to press, the NHSA has held four regional conferences, and one more will take place while the newsletter is on the presses. The last conference will be in late June (See box).

Whether the conferences are large (Southeast and Midwest) or small (West and East), they have allowed consumers, paraprofessional staff, senior program

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NHSA's 2006 Regional Conferences			
Region	States/Territories	Date	Location
Southeast	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee	April 23-25	Tampa, FL
West	Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, South Dakota	April 30 - May 2	Oakland, CA
Midwest	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin	May 4 - 6	St. Louis, MO
East	District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia	May 7 - 9	Baltimore, MD
Northeast	Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico	June 7 - 9	New Haven, CT
Southwest	Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas	June 28 - 30	New Orleans, LA

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The National Healthy Start Association, Inc., 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 birthweight and racial disparity.

NHSA

Board Nominations Process under Review

Because the NHSA's by-laws currently tie the election of new board members to HRSA's annual grantee meeting, which this year was moved from the fall to June, the NHSA is considering revising the by-laws to make the election part of the Association's annual Spring Conference. This change, if instituted, will impact when the NHSA seeks nominations and when new terms begin. Updates will be provided in the next newsletter and via email.

New Knowledge Path Edition: Infant Mortality

The MCH Library released a new edition of its knowledge path about infant mortality. This electronic resource guide offers a selection of current, high-quality resources that analyze data, describe public health campaigns and other prevention programs, and reports on research aimed at identifying causes and promising intervention strategies. The knowledge path is intended for use by health professionals, policymakers, program administrators and families. It is available at http://www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_infmort.html. Knowledge paths on other maternal and child health topics are also available (See <http://mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/index.html>).

Beginnings Guides Available at Discounted Prices to NHSA Members

NHSA members receive a discount on orders of the *Beginnings Guides'* "Pregnancy Guide" and "The New Parent's Guide." The special price is available at any time. Practice Development, Inc., the publishers, makes a donation to the Association based on member orders. For more information about the *Guides*, visit www.BeginningsGuides.net.

Strengthening

Strengthening Projects through Consumer Involvement

The “Strengthening Projects through Consumer Involvement” workshop was one of the highlights of the NHSA’s 2006 Spring Conference. Virginia Martinez, Director of the International Center for Health Leadership Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago, examined the value and importance of consumer involvement. Wynetta Frazier, a consultant with Westside Healthy Start in Chicago, identified best practices in building and supporting consumer leadership. She concluded that the greatest and most successful projects will be those that help meet some of our consumers most basic needs—food, shelter, growth and development (...to make us whole) and love (...to nurture our spirit).

Former consumers Earlene Paschel and Carla Andrews (see Consumer Spotlight article on page 5) engaged the audience by telling their stories and outlining key elements of Healthy Start that strengthen consumer involvement. While coming from quite different backgrounds – Carla working on a college degree and Earlene without a high school diploma when they first encountered Healthy Start – both told stories of finding support they needed to elevate their self-esteem and provide the structure in their lives that they needed to adequately care for their children. Their list of key elements that strengthen consumer involvement included mentoring, modeling appropriate behavior, developing trust, creating support

systems, providing a process for consumers to be involved in planning, providing leadership training, hiring from involved consumers, listening and hearing the consumer perspective and encouragement.

Earlene said that Healthy Start saved her life, and has told her story at both the 2004 and 2006 West Regional Conferences and at the 2006 Spring Conference. Carla served as Central Hillsborough’s Community Consortium Co-Chairperson for four years before becoming a Community Outreach Worker for the project in June 2005.

The Consumer in Action workshop, on the agenda at each of NHSA’s six regional conferences, provides an opportunity for consumers in projects across the country to continue telling their stories. Having experienced the first four regional conferences and heard some of these stories, it is evident that Healthy Start has become a life-saving program for many who had fallen victim to the broken families and a lack of thriving communities that once served as their pillar of support and hope for mothers and their families. These heartfelt stories are the success stories of the Healthy Start program. They paint a picture of Healthy Start’s mission and purpose and provide us with reasons to continue to expand and maintain the core elements of the healthy start program.

Regional Conferences...from page 1

staff, project directors, executive directors, Title V representatives, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services staff and others to network and learn from one another. Through the first four conferences, 425 Healthy Start folks have met regionally. A Planning Team for each region tailored the standard agenda to meet its particular needs and interests.

In Oakland, for example, the West Planning Team brought back Neil Tift of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, who presented at the region’s conference in 2004. This year, Tift worked with conference attendees on father-inclusive practices, building on a theme begun at the NHSA’s Spring Conference. The Southeast region decided that fatherhood/male involvement would be a “priority issue” for their region. Afterward, fatherhood representatives from the region submitted an abstract to the Division for the June Grantee Meeting, and it was accepted.

Each conference has had dignitaries to offer greetings and open the conferences. Joshua Sharfstein, Baltimore’s Commissioner of Health, who is also Chairman of the Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc. board, welcomed the East conferees. Susan Jenkins, from the Division of Community and Public Health, Missouri Department of Health, opened the Midwest Conference in St. Louis. In Tampa, participants heard from Pastor W. D. Sims, St. Matthew Missionary Baptist Church; Donna Petersen, Dean, College of Public Health, University of South Florida; and J. Annette Phelps, Director, Division of Family Health Services, Florida Department of Health. And the West group was greeted by Arnold Perkins, Public Health Director of the Alameda County Public Health Department.

The fall issue will highlight lessons learned from the regional conferences and include the recommendations the NHSA board will consider in its strategic planning for the next few years.

The NHSA’s web site contains useful information for members and others, such as an online Directory with contact information for all federally funded Healthy Start projects. Go to www.healthystartassoc.org.

Spring Conference...from page 1

trials with a “package of interventions that conceptually promise to have impact on pregnancy outcomes.”

A recognition luncheon honored founders of the NHSA, in particular Tom Coyle and Michelle Drayton-Martin, who were the first co-presidents of the organization and led to its incorporation. Madie Robinson, Dianna Christmas and Carol Synkewecz were honored as founding board members and Mildred Thompson was recognized as an early project director involved in the NHSA's establishment. Thurma McCann Goldman and Bernice Young were presented *in absentia* with “supporter's awards,” for understanding the need for an association and supporting its founding during their time with the original Healthy Start division at the Department of Health and Human Service's Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Other highlights included a session on strengthening projects through consumer involvement, which featured consumers offering their views (see article), the introduction of the NHSA's new “Strategies for Success” toolkit and general or breakout sessions on three special Healthy Start initiatives for perinatal depression,

interconceptional care and family violence.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) co-sponsored the Conference, and presented on their recently released recommendations on preconception care. Consumers were treated to a session on CityMatCH's Perinatal Periods of Risk model, helping them to better understand why babies die in their communities – and what they can do about it. Project directors and others heard about the NHSA's Internet Forum, a cornerstone of the future Healthy Start Peer Learning Network, which was expanded on during the Association's 2006 Regional Conferences.

From the orientation sessions held Sunday evening to the Hill Visit Debriefing on Wednesday afternoon, this year's conference provided a wealth of information, new ideas, chances for networking and a look back at where Healthy Start came from and a view to where it's going.

Slide presentations from the conference are on the NHSA website's Archive page.

Partners Corner: From The March of Dimes

The March of Dimes is a national not-for-profit organization whose mission is to “improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.” March of Dimes has chapters in every state and relies on the efforts of not only its dedicated staff, but over three million volunteers to accomplish its mission.

The March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign began in 2003, in response to the increasing rate of premature birth (over 30% since 1981). It now stands at 12.3%, or 500,000 babies born too early every year. Among the African American community, the rate is about 18%. The March of Dimes is funding research to find causes and means for preventing prematurity, including the effect of disparities.

In addition to funding research, the March of Dimes is applying what we know about risk reduction. There are things that women can do, before they get pregnant, to help give their baby a better chance of a healthy and full-term birth. This concept of preconception (and interconception) care has been in the news as a result of recommendations published by the CDC.

To educate both women and providers, March of Dimes has created a flyer that suggests women ask nine questions of their doctor or nurse before and during pregnancy. These questions focus on key areas of risk reduction that can improve the health of the woman and her pregnancy outcomes: chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, interactions of certain medications on pregnancy, folic acid, ideal weight, stress (domestic violence, etc.), substance abuse (smoking, alcohol, drugs), interconception planning, hereditary and genetics and signs of preterm labor.

The current flyer has the popular singer, Thalia, communicating this message in both English and Spanish. It is hoped that in time

for Prematurity Awareness Month, November 2006, we will have an African American celebrity as well. When these new flyers are available, we expect to mail packages to all Healthy Start sites.

In addition to premature birth, March of Dimes has placed a priority on eliminating disparities in pregnancy outcomes. Several Healthy Start sites, including one serving the Englewood area of southwest Chicago and the Palmetto Healthy Start program in Columbia, South Carolina, are partners with the March of Dimes in a CDC grant to reduce disparities in premature birth by testing models of delivering preconception and prenatal education and services to minority women. This occurred as a result of the strong relationship between the March of Dimes' national office and the National Healthy Start Association.

Another current March of Dimes' activity is promoting newborn screening. All states screen newborns for certain metabolic birth defects. (Metabolic refers to chemical changes that take place within living cells.) These conditions cannot be seen in the newborn, but can cause physical problems, mental retardation and, in some cases, death. The March of Dimes recommends that all newborns be screened for at least 29 disorders. You can find out more by going to the web site at http://www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/298_834.asp

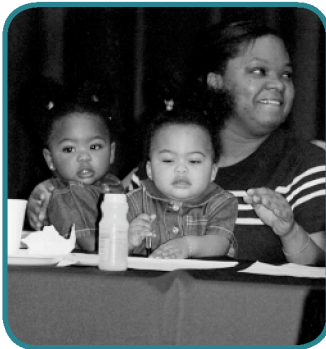
We encourage those Healthy Start sites that do not have a strong relationship with the March of Dimes chapter in their area to contact them. You can go to www.marchofdimes.com, and in the upper right hand corner, put in your zip code. The chapter nearest to you will be displayed. March of Dimes chapters would look forward to working with you on programs, grant applications and other opportunities.



Spotlight

Spotlight on Consumers

In this issue, the spotlight is on two consumers – both now employees of Healthy Start projects – and whose presentations at the Spring Conference inspired the “Strengthening Projects through Community Involvement” article on page 3.



Carla R. Andrews

Mother of three children (Raeno, 11, and Healthy Start babies Sade and Sole, 5-year-old fraternal twins), 33-year-old Carla Andrews became part of the Central Hillsborough Healthy Start (CHHS) program in Tampa, Florida, in July 2000, when she was five-and-a-half

months pregnant. A nurse at her provider’s office told her about the program and highly recommended it, especially since Carla was considered high risk. Once her twins were born, Carla began attending Community Council meetings.

She also participated in clinical and peer support groups and was very active and vocal about the issues being discussed. Her passion and determination to succeed became the catalyst for using her as a consultant to conduct trainings and workshops for CHHS staff. CHHS management perceived the importance of having Carla, who overcame obstacles that might have seemed insurmountable to others, as an Outreach Worker, and hired her first as temporary staff, and then brought her on full-time in June 2005.

Carla became co-chairperson of the Consortium in November 2001, meeting monthly with the project director and other mentors to provide updates and gain support to attain her goals and objectives. She chaired consortium meetings and attended various local, state and national meetings, including the NHSA’s annual Spring Conference, and seminars to represent CHHS.

Carla says, “Being in Healthy Start was a personal and professional growth experience. Now that I have been on both sides of the track (consumer and staff), I have a deeper and broader understanding of the women in our community. But the biggest benefit is the support I received overall and having a job opened to me with this program.”

Deborah Austin, Community Outreach Manager, says, “As CHHS staff and other consortium participants watched Carla chair our Community Council meetings, we all were delighted to see a beautiful, intelligent young woman,

who initially barely spoke, blossom into a confident, articulate advocate for herself and other consumers on the local, state and national levels. Additionally, Carla was able to complete her Associates degree and then her Bachelors degree as a result of being involved with Healthy Start. As with many of our consumers, things were not always easy for Carla, including a high-risk pregnancy and relationship difficulties. We are so proud of the way Carla took advantage of all that CHHS had to offer, using our services and support to help her identify the difference between where she was and where she would like to be and then create a plan to guide her in achieving her goals.”



Earlene Paschel

Earlene Paschel, 37, a resident of Los Angeles and mother of two (Philip, age 13, and Healthy Start baby Duane, 3), learned about the SHIELDS for Families Healthy Start program from a Healthy Start Outreach

Worker who did an intake assessment when she was in King/Drew Medical Center after the birth of her infant son. She enrolled because she wanted to start a new life for herself and her sons, living free of mind-altering substances. Immediately after enrolling in the program, she began to attend all classes, groups and sessions provided by the Healthy Start program.

Becoming active in the Consortium, Earlene represented Healthy Start on a monthly basis at the Consumer Advisory Board meeting. Earlene is now an employee of SHIELDS for Families as an Outreach Worker in a local Department of Public Social Services office. She regularly attends the bi-monthly meetings and is a member of the Training Sub-Committee. Earlene has also been very active with the NHSA by attending and presenting at two Regional Conferences and the Spring Conference. Earlene earned her high school diploma while enrolled in the Healthy Start program and currently attends El Camino Community College in pursuit of her AA degree in Early Childhood Development.

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Update..

Update from the Hill

After receiving advocacy training at the NHTSA's Spring Conference, almost 300 conferees attended the Association's Fifth Annual Congressional Reception on Capitol Hill on March 28th, in the Judiciary Committee Hearing Room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Honored this year were Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) for his unwavering support of Healthy Start over the years; and Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL) for their support of Healthy Start and in assisting the NHTSA to receive the special Congressional funding that underwrote the Regional Conferences.

Subsequently, Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), cosigner of this year's "Dear Colleague" appropriations letter with Representative John Spratt (D-SC), has advised the NHTSA that as *Getting off to a Healthy Start* goes to press, more than 30 representatives have signed the letter. Her office reports that the FY 2007 budget is being marked up in subcommittees and in the full committee, and estimates that it will go to the floor in mid to late June, which is when the budget for Healthy Start will be determined on the House side. Staffers on the Senate side are less optimistic, and have said it could be fall before they take up the Labor, HHS budget.

From the Projects...

Information provided by the projects from their "leave-behind" packets given to elected officials during the NHTSA's Hill Visit Day, March 29th, or from recent project newsletters:

- *Fayette County Healthy Start*, Uniontown, PA, reached over half a million women in the county's communities from 2001-2005 through public and health education initiatives.
- *MomsFirst*, Cleveland, OH's Participant Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2005 found that 76% of women surveyed felt that having a home visitor made a difference during their pregnancy or after the baby was born, and 80% of those said the home visitor helped them understand health information from their doctors and nurses.
- *Pee Dee Healthy Start*, Florence, SC, reported that 241 babies received Healthy Start services in 2005 and that 886 program and community participants were provided information about Healthy Start services at health fairs and community events.
- *Louisville Metro Healthy Start*, KY's First Quarter 2006 report shows that 86 new clients enrolled in Healthy Start; 66 participants attended classes; 296 women had visits from their case manager and 100 were visited by nurses; and 116 infants or children were visited by a resource mother.
- *Enterprise Community Healthy Start* in Augusta, GA, reported that as of October 2005, 192 women and 181 infants were enrolled in case management in 2005.

Be sure to include the NHTSA on your project's mailing list!

Concerning reauthorization, the NHTSA has heard from various Hill sources that at present, no health programs have been authorized during this session of Congress. Congressional staff members have indicated they will keep the NHTSA informed as to when the best time will be to introduce reauthorization. The Association will keep members advised through email alerts and the next issue of the newsletter concerning next steps.



Louisiana representatives from Healthy Start meet with Senator Mary Landrieu.

Spotlight on Consumers...from page 5

"Ms. Paschel has been a pleasure to watch grow and develop into a model client, community advocate and staff person," reports Charlene Smith, Healthy Start Director. "She has the determination and drive to stick with an issue until it is resolved. Her compassion is second to none as she strives to lend helping hands to those Healthy Start clients that have come after her in the program. The staff at SHIELDS commends Earlene for her desire, dedication, determination and devotion for the leadership and success she has exhibited in the SHIELDS for Families Healthy Start program."

"I truly have benefited from the Healthy Start Program," says Earlene. "With my first son, I didn't know the meaning of different cries or what it meant to read to your child on a daily basis. Healthy Start taught me how to be a Mom and to love me for me and to be the best mother I know how to be. Healthy Start paved the way for me to gain my high school diploma and to re-enter the job market with confidence. I can't say enough about the skills and knowledge that I have learned from this program. I will continue to be a part of SHIELDS and the Healthy Start program for the rest of my life. I want to let other young mothers know, first of all, the greatest love to share with your children is being clean and sober. Secondly, I want them to know that programs like Healthy Start work. Take advantage of the support, the education, the leadership opportunities and the mentoring, and doors will surely open up for you as they did for me!"

Fast.. Fast Facts and Hot Stats

Substantial numbers of Los Angeles food pantry clients are eligible for food stamps, but only 15% receive them. For the majority of clients who do not receive food stamps, homelessness and limited English language skills are barriers to participation.

The Guttmacher Institute reports that since 1994, unplanned pregnancies among poor women have increased by 29%, while rates among higher-income women have decreased by 20%.

Children & Youth Funding Report, May 11, 2006 and May 25, 2006.

Number and Poverty Rate for Children in Hurricane Katrina Flooded or Damaged Area

	Total	Poor	Percent Poor
Ages 0-4	46,025	15,079	32.8%
Ages 5-17	134,077	39,567	29.5%
Total Under 18	180,102	54,646	30.3%

FIMR: Making Healthy Communities Happen, National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program, Spring 2006.

Data from the National Survey of Family Growth conducted in 2002, which for the first time included men:

Teen fathers – Among non-Hispanic Black fathers, 25% fathered their first child before they were 20 years old, 19% of Hispanic fathers also became fathers as teenagers and

11% of non-Hispanic White men became fathers while they were teens.

Nonmarital childbearing – About one-half of the men without a high school education have fathered a child outside of marriage, compared with about 6% among college graduates.

Child support – About three-quarters of the 28 million men who have children (under age 19) live with those children. Among fathers who live apart from their children, 85% of fathers with higher incomes contributed to their children's support on a regular basis, compared with 64% of fathers with income below the poverty level.

Marriage and divorce – A third of men marry by age 25; almost two-thirds marry by age 30. Among women, one-half are married by the time they are 25 and three-quarters by age 30. Overall, men marry later in life than women. The average woman marries a man two years older than she. One-half of the men who married as teenagers were divorced or separated within 10 years, compared with 17% of men who married at 26 years or over.

Sexual activity – Men who did not live with both parents at age 14 were more likely to have had sexual intercourse during the teenage years (19 or younger) compared with those who lived with both parents at age 14.

Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth by Gladys M. Martinez, Ph.D., Anjani Chandra, Ph.D., Joyce C. Abma, Ph.D., Jo Jones, Ph.D., and William D. Mosher, Ph.D., Division of Vital Statistics.

Become a Friend of Healthy Start!

The NHSA depends on contributions from supporters, as well as members. If you would like to become a Friend of Healthy Start, please complete the form below and send it today with your check.

I/we want to be a Friend of Healthy Start and enclose a check to National Healthy Start Association, Inc.

- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Community-based organizations; local businesses and corporations
- \$100 State or regional organizations, businesses or corporations
- \$200 National organizations, businesses or corporations
- Additional contribution enclosed \$ _____

Name _____ Company Name _____
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Please return this form with your check to: National Healthy Start Association, Inc., P.O. Box 25227, Baltimore, MD21229-0327.

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Mark Your Calendars

National Association of County & Public Health Officials' Annual Conference, *The Local Health Department Story: Know It. Live It. Share It*, July 26-28, 2006, San Antonio, TX, www.naccho.org.

CityMatCH's 16th Annual Urban MCH Leadership Conference, *Providence 2006: Where Obstacles Become Opportunities*, August 20-22, 2006, Providence, RI, www.citymatch.org.

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials' Annual Meeting, September 12-15, 2006, Atlanta, GA, www.astho.org.

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs' 2007 AMCHP Annual Conference, March 3-7, 2007, Arlington, Virginia, www.amchp.org.

NHSA's Eighth Annual Spring Education Conference, March 18-21, 2006, Washington, DC, www.healthystartassoc.org.

Healthy Start in the News

Has your Healthy Start project been in the news lately? Send the NHSA links to newspaper articles, TV news stories or radio and TV PSAs so they can be shared with your fellow projects.

STAY IN TOUCH!

Be sure to notify the Association if you change project directors or contact information, such as e-mail addresses or phone numbers. This will keep our records up to date so we can easily notify you of important news.



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