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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FATHERHOOD EMPTY SHOES MEMORIAL AT LOCAL BARBER SHOPS HONORS BABIES WHO DIED IN 2017

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition is recognizing the loss of an infant from a father’s perspective and honoring the 137 babies that before their first birthday in 2017 as part of National Infant Mortality Awareness Month. Fatherhood PRIDE, a Coalition initiative and three local barbershops are partnering for a Fatherhood Empty Shoes Memorial all week, which will culminate with an education and awareness day on Saturday, September 29.

Each year, too many babies die before their first birthday. We continue to lose the equivalent of eight classes of kindergarteners in Northeast Florida because of preventable causes and lack of health services. September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month and the Healthy Start Coalition continues to sound the alarm and raise awareness of infant mortality through education and activities.

September 24-29 is **Fatherhood Empty Shoes Memorial Week**. This memorial event will raise awareness of the effects of loss from a father’s perspective. Local barbershops will display an empty baby shoes memorial in recognition of fathers, while educating fathers and fathers-to-be on infant mortality. All week at:

- Platinum Cutts, 1704 Southside Blvd., Jacksonville, FL
- Platinum Cutts, 2550 Mayport Rd., Atlantic Beach, FL
- Chop Shop Barber Shop, 7412 Atlantic Blvd., Jacksonville, FL

September 29 is **Fatherhood Empty Shoes Memorial Day**. The three barber shops will continue to commemorate the babies that died too soon and spread information on preventing infant mortality on their busiest day of the week.

Infant mortality has decreased by 35 percent since the Healthy Start program and community-based Healthy Start coalitions were created in 1991. But despite these achievements, 137 babies died in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties in 2017, with an additional 127 fetal deaths or stillbirths. The infant mortality rate was relatively unchanged in 2017, dropping from 7.4 to 7.3 deaths per 1000 live births. The regional rate remains significantly higher than the state (6.1 deaths) and nation (5.9 deaths).

About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

The Healthy Start Coalition leads the community effort to reduce infant death and improve the health of children, childbearing women, fathers and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, [view our media kit](#) visit us at <http://nefhealthystart.org> or on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram @nefhealthystart.

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