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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**INTERNATIONAL MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH EXPERTS VISIT JACKSONVILLE
PRECONCEPTION HEALTH INITIATIVE**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Two international maternal and child health experts from the Netherlands are stopping in Jacksonville on Monday, March 13, to visit the Magnolia Project, a nationally-recognized preconception health initiative.

The Magnolia Project, an initiative of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, is a case management and clinic model that serves women of childbearing age on Jacksonville's Northside. Magnolia, a Federal Healthy Start project, has been recognized as a promising practice in maternal and child health¹.

Eric A.P. Steegers, MD, PhD and Régine P.M. Steegers-Theunissen, MD, PhD, from the university-affiliated medical center Erasmus MC in Rotterdam, Netherlands, will tour the Magnolia Project and meet with several Coalition staff and partners to learn about the local efforts to improve women's health. The visit was arranged to allow them to see preconception health care initiatives in action in the United States while they are in the country for a conference.

Dr. Steegers is professor and chair of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, while Dr. Steegers-Theunissen is a professor of periconception epidemiology in the Obstetrics and Gynecology and Paediatrics departments. Dr. Steegers' work has centered around the impact of chronic disease during pregnancy, while Dr. Steegers-Theunissen has focused on birth outcomes related to the periconception period.

The Magnolia Project was launched in 1999 to address an identified gap in Jacksonville's system of maternal and child health services – pre- and interconception health. A woman's health prior to pregnancy was identified through the NEFL Fetal & Infant Mortality Review and Perinatal Periods of Risk model as having the greatest impact on birth outcomes in Jacksonville's Health Zone 1, which had the region's highest infant mortality rate at the time. While Jacksonville still has a high infant mortality rate and significant racial disparities, today more babies in Health Zone 1 are living to see their first birthday.

Magnolia serves predominantly black women in ZIP codes 32202, 32204, 32206, 32208 and 32209. The Project is a recognized leader in the development, implementation and evaluation of preconception health. It uses a life course model and serves as an important community entry point for women seeking both prenatal and well woman care, especially family planning services.

Drs. Steegers and Steegers-Theunissen will join Carol Brady, former Coalition executive director and founder of the Magnolia Project; Faye Johnson, Coalition Chief Executive Officer and former Magnolia

¹ <http://nefhealthystart.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Promising-Practices1.pdf>

Project Director; along with Coalition staff, Board members and community partners the Florida Department of Health Duval County and Agape Community Health Centers.

The visit will include a presentation by Drs. Steegers and Steegers-Theunissen; a tour of the facilities and introduction to the Magnolia team; and presentations from community partners. To attend, please contact Erin Addington at eaddington@nefhsc.org or 904.723.5422.

About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

The Healthy Start Coalition leads a cooperative community effort to reduce infant mortality and improve the health of children, childbearing women and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, visit <http://nefhealthystart.org> or on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @nefhealthystart.

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