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MARCH OF DIMES AWARDS GRANT TO NORTHEAST FLORIDA HEALTHY START COALITION TO HELP IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF MOTHERS AND BABIES

Maitland, FL – September 5, 2017 – March of Dimes, whose mission is to improve the health of babies, is pleased to advance maternal and infant health by supporting the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition with a \$16,000 community service grant. The program will establish training and education to encourage women to use a family planning method and space out their babies by at least 18 months as a means to improve birth outcomes in the region.

The March of Dimes funds programs that help moms have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies. This includes financial support to research and education that will help moms before and during their pregnancies. It also includes working with local medical groups and organizations to improve prenatal care and newborn screening. In 2016, March of Dimes awarded \$114,000 to community agencies throughout Florida.

“Funding from the March of Dimes will help us meet a gap in preconception and postpartum education to make sure women are aware of the choices they have to help plan

their families. Our goal is to ultimately improve birth outcomes and make sure every baby has a healthy start in life," Coalition Chief Executive Officer Faye Johnson said.

"The potential impact of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition will help us prevent premature births, birth defects and infant mortality," said Dr. Karen Harris, March of Dimes Maternal and Child Health Committee Chair. "We are pleased that our successful fundraising efforts, such as March for Babies, make it possible for us to support this new, locally focused effort to help give every baby a fighting chance."

The Coalition will use the funding to train primary care and pediatric clinicians in federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) to implement the National Preconception and Interconception Resource Guide and IMPLICIT/ICC toolkits during primary care and well-child visits. The toolkits will help clinicians discuss family planning with women during a critical window of opportunity to prevent unintended and closely-spaced pregnancies. Group education workshops will also be provided in FQHCs for women not currently using a family planning method to provide education on long acting reversible contraceptives like the implant and intrauterine devices. The clinicians will refer women to the workgroups after using the screenings from the new toolkits.

About the March of Dimes

The March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For more than 75 years, moms and babies have benefited from March of Dimes research, education, vaccines, and breakthroughs. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.org or nacersano.org. Find us on

Facebook at @marchofdimesflorida, Twitter at @marchofdimesfl, and Instagram at @marchofdimesflorida.

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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