

## Black Infant Health Practice Initiative launched in 2008

Jacksonville was one of eight Florida counties that participated in the Florida Black Infant Health Practice Collaborative during 2007-08. This initiative grew out of advocacy efforts by the Central Healthy Start Project, a federal Healthy Start initiative in Tampa. Local legislators secured one-time state funding to support a multi-site response to racial disparities in birth outcomes. Eight cities—six urban and two rural—took part in the year long effort that focused on community mobilization, and quantitative and qualitative analyses of racial disparities in birth outcomes. Two state universities provided technical assistance and support to the community-led efforts. Four of the five federal Healthy Start project sites in Florida were included in the initiative.

In Jacksonville, the practice collaborative built on the work of the Healthy Start Coalition and the Magnolia Project and resulted in the organization of the Black Infant Health Community Council, which aims to sustain awareness and education efforts in the future. The Governing Board of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition has agreed to provide on-going support and staffing for the Council.



## The Magnolia Project

### Magnolia Project Staff Listing

Rhonda Johnson  
Project Director

Alma Amoran  
Health Educator

Shelia Barton  
Lab Technician

Benita Cherry  
Case Management Consultant

Sara Heath  
ARNP

Vontricia Johnson  
Billing Clerk

Conastine Morgan  
Human Service Counselor

Ann Smith  
Registered Nurse

Jacqueline Thies  
Nurse Supervisor

Marsha Davis  
Community Development Coordinator

Jenetha Denmark  
Outreach Follow-Up

Faye Johnson  
Case Management Consultant

Alicia King  
Women's Intervention Specialist

Anna Matthews  
Case Manager

Meloni McNealy  
Case Manager

Trina Williams  
Case Manager

Ashley Morris  
Community Outreach Specialist

### *A publication of the Magnolia Project*

5300 Pearl St. N., Jacksonville, FL 32208 / p. 904.353.2130 / f. 904.353.2131 / [www.magnoliaproject.org](http://www.magnoliaproject.org)

Project #: 2H49MC00051-05-00



### Magnolia Project Serves 700 Women Annually

The Magnolia Project is a prenatal and interconceptional initiative aimed at reducing racial disparities in infant mortality by providing targeted outreach, screening, case management and risk reduction, health education, prenatal and well-woman care in an at-risk, predominantly African American community in northwest Jacksonville. Funded by the federal Healthy Start initiative, the Project serves more than 700 women annually and addresses specific risk factors and service needs identified in the local Healthy Start Service Delivery Plan and the area's Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Project as contributing to high infant mortality rates.

The Magnolia Project, located in a store-front site, utilizes a collaborative service delivery model involving the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, the Duval County Health Department and other community partners.

The Magnolia Project incorporates community and participant empowerment in its approach to both service delivery and governance. It includes an active Community Council, made up of Project participants and indigenous neighborhood leaders, that works to engage the community in addressing disparities in birth outcomes.

### Site Visit & Re-Funding

Magnolia hosted a week-long site visit for the Project Officer from the federal Healthy Start program. The Project Officer met with Coalition and community leaders, Project staff and partner agencies to assess the success of the Project in addressing infant mortality and women's health issues. She participated in a windshield tour of the neighborhoods served by the Project. In addition, she accompanied case managers on home visits, reviewed participant records and attended the April Healthy Start Coalition membership meeting. She noted the uniqueness of the Magnolia Project and its focus on improving the health of women before and between pregnancies.

In May 2009, the Project received another five years of funding from the federal Health Services and Resources Administration which will enable the Project to continue its services to reduce infant mortality in Jacksonville.

## Magnolia's Community Council

The Community Council has continued its outreach by sharing the importance of pre- and interconceptional care to neighborhood residents. Now with nearly 16 women dedicated to its cause, the Council has developed partnerships with Andrew Jackson High School and A. Philip Randolph Academies of Technology. During 2008, the Council provided educational seminars to an A. Philip Randolph women's group twice a month.

Ava Anglin, Latarsha Bethea, Eartha Bryant, Leila Crutchfield, Teleicia Davis, Shakia Davis, Tracie Edwards, Zina Jackson, Ciletha Mann, Katrina McGriff, Trina Reed, Patria Reeves, Ernestine Shannon, Chellene Stephens, Lisa Thomas, Del'toria Wims.

## Centering Pregnancy

The Magnolia Project Centering Pregnancy program provides prenatal care to first-time mothers using group care model. The pregnant women are grouped by due date and track their own pregnancy along with Magnolia Project staff. Since 2007, over 100 participants have been enrolled in the program and many have completed the program by delivering health babies. Among the women who participated, seven experienced a loss due to miscarriages and stillbirths. Of the women who participated, many enjoyed their experience and benefited from being able to discuss their pregnancy with others which lead to building personal relationships for on-going support.

## Pass the Fruits & Vegetables Initiative

The University of North Florida was funded to do a follow-up study on the 2006 Pass the Fruits & Vegetables initiative. Nearly 50 women participated from the Magnolia Project and Cleveland Arms Apartments. Each woman followed a four-month nutrition program implemented by student researchers and Magnolia's health educator. Participants in the "experimental group" were instructed to purchase only fresh fruits and vegetables, while the "control group" could purchase any edible groceries. Nutrient, dietary and weight data are currently being analyzed. The secondary aim of the study to be completed in May 2009, surveyed 300 African American women about the historical relationship between their fruit and vegetable intake and their weight. Pass the Fruits & Vegetables has been peer-reviewed at the 2008 Governor's Women's Health Conference in Orlando, Florida. It has also been accepted into many other publications and reviews.

## WJCT's Speaking of Women's Health Conference 2008

More than 1,200 women attended the seventh annual Speaking of Women's Health Conference hosted by WJCT Public Broadcasting and Baptist Health in August 2008. The Magnolia Project was recognized with a \$5,000 check for its outstanding work in the community. The all-day event offered a day of fun and pampering to many women in the community. Free give-away bags were given out, along with an informal fashion show and free health screenings. The conference is dedicated to educating women to make informed decisions about their health, wellbeing and personal safety. The \$5,000 was earmarked for the upcoming social marketing campaign to increase

awareness of Jacksonville's high infant mortality rate. In 2009, the social marketing campaign will be launched and coordinated by the staff of Magnolia Project, the Azalea Project and Hold Out The Lifeline.



## Participant Appreciation Day hosted in January

The Magnolia Project hosted a participant appreciation day in appreciation for their dedication and support during the transition to the new site location. Nearly 50 participants were able to enjoy personal services donated by area businesses, as well as education about their health and wellness.

Magnolia Project staff worked with the women to educate them on the importance of annual exams, safe sex and pre- and interconception health. The participants appreciated the staff's willingness to recognize their efforts to staying healthy. The Magnolia Project continues to celebrate participants successes and encourages them to continue to make positive changes that affect themselves and their future pregnancies.



## Magnolia Featured at National Conference

Magnolia Project Director, Rhonda Johnson, facilitated a plenary session at the "Best Practices for the Reduction of Infant Mortality in Underserved Communities" in Memphis Tennessee in May 2009. During the session she discussed innovative ways to identify and recruit pre- and interconceptional women for health services, factors that contribute to poor birth outcomes, barriers that affect women seeking medical care and strategies to engage non-pregnant women in case management services. More than 200 people attended this event, hosted by the Office of Minority Health's "A Healthy Baby Begins with You" Campaign.

## Grassroots Advocacy Workshop

In January 2009, the Healthy Start Coalition, in coordination with the Black Infant Health Community Council, hosted a Grassroots Advocacy Workshop at Historic Mt. Zion AME Church. The workshop engaged nearly 50 neighborhood residents and community leaders who want to take an active role in advocating for the needs and services in their area. The Magnolia Project recruited many of the participants and also provided the workshop with panel speakers who had knowledge of community-based advocacy. Community leaders spoke to the group about the importance of their voice and the meaning it has to the legislators. Five speakers, including Magnolia Project Community Council members were recruited to speak about different advocacy-related issues and best practices tips.



Magnolia Project visits Washington D.C.