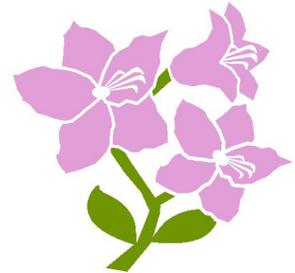


Azalea Project

Community Report 2007 - 2008

Women's Giving Alliance Funds Azalea Outreach

Outreach efforts at the Azalea Project, a special Coalition program focusing on pregnant and parenting substance-involved women, will be restored thanks to new support from the Women's Giving Alliance. The Alliance, an initiative of The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, provided first-time funding to the project in 2007, which will support a new outreach worker to assist staff in engaging and retaining at-risk women referred for case management and other services.



The Alliance is a dynamic group of diverse women who pool their philanthropic giving to make a lasting impact on the lives of women and girls in northeast Florida. The Azalea Project caught the attention of the organization because of its success in reaching women at highest risk. The project provides education, support and related services that reduce the risk of a poor birth outcome and HIV. The project model was initially developed with federal support and is currently funded by the Healthy Start Coalition and the City of Jacksonville.

National Black HIV Awareness Day

February 7, 2008 was the eighth annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The primary goal is to motivate African Americans to get tested, get educated, get involved and get treated. The Azalea Project honored the day by educating and increasing awareness within the community at an open house with free HIV testing, educational materials, food and music. Red balloons lined the site on Market and Eighth Streets, which stand for the many lives touched by HIV/AIDS.

The Azalea Project works diligently to help high-risk women who are at risk for poor birth outcomes by addressing the many factors that can increase infant



Male Responsibility Activity

Fathers and babies had the opportunity to pose for professional photos donated by a local photographer. The fathers were given a free photo and an additional photo is displayed at the Azalea Project. Fathers were appreciated in this way to show that they are not invisible and their involvement in the child's life is important, necessary and positive. Not only will their involvement make a positive difference in the child's life, but also the encouraging support a man can give to a pregnant woman is crucial. The men talked about the challenges in their lives and the importance of staying active their child's life.



Participants Featured at an Infant Mortality Study

Two Azalea Project participants spoke to a group of nearly 40 Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. (JCCI) study members about infant mortality. The study addressed the high infant mortality rate in Jacksonville and the impact it is having on the lives of the women and community.

The women spoke about their personal life circumstances, both good and bad, while continuing to praise the work of the Project. Both women detailed their experiences before committing to the Azalea Project for case management. The participants gave an overview of the community-based organizations around the area that helped them while pregnant, but none of the programs compare to the Azalea Project. The compassionate staff members, the location and the mentorship program that the Project offers makes the women feel safe, secure and empowered to change their lives.

The study group members appreciated the willingness of the women to share their stories which put a human face on infant mortality in our community.

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Community Projects are the Key to Success

Azalea Project staff shared their experiences in developing a successful community-based intervention for substance-involved women with participants at the 2007 Minority Women's Health Summit held this summer in the nation's capital.

The presentation by the Azalea Project Director underscored the importance of having an accessible neighborhood location that encouraged ownership by the community and cultivated non-traditional referral networks. The Azalea Project's goal during the initial three years was to have 60 women complete the 18-month intensive intervention (Women: 90% completed, Youth: 103% completed). The project served over 400 women and 125 women were enrolled in case management. Ninety-four percent of pregnant women served by the project delivered substance-free infants; there were no HIV+ infants born to project participants.

Jacksonville supports the Azalea Project

The City of Jacksonville believes in the mission of the Azalea Project and chose to fund one full-time case manager to work with women in the target area. The funding is being used to provide intensive case management services to non-pregnant women of childbearing age (ages 15-44). Additional funding from Healthy Start allows the project to focus on pregnant women and teens who are at risk for substance abuse and HIV. The project serves many women each year and many have stories of success.



“Courage to Love” The Beauty of Pregnancy

The *Courage to Love*, a photo session for pregnant women to expose the beauty of pregnancy, is an activity the Azalea Project pursued. The women received a free photo of themselves and their unborn child. The pictures are moving and beautiful – and especially touching to the mothers-to-be.