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**FAMILY-FRIENDLY WALK, CELEBRATION TO HIGHLIGHT THIRD ANNUAL
JACKSONVILLE BABY BUGGY WALK IN THE PARK**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – When families line up with strollers full of happy, healthy babies at Friendship Fountain on September 24, they will unite Jacksonville with cities across the country to send a powerful message: babies deserve a healthy start in life.

The third annual Jacksonville Baby Buggy Walk in the Park is a family-friendly festival and walk intended to call attention to the link between healthy lifestyles, healthy families and healthy babies. The walk takes place during National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, which aims to bring awareness to improving birth outcomes and reducing health disparities.

The Baby Buggy Walk will provide an opportunity for families to come together for exercise; a health fair; a costume- and stroller- decorating contest; a children’s reading corner; and a fun day in the park. The event begins at 10:00 a.m. at Friendship Fountain, 1015 Museum Cir.

The event emphasizes the important role of parents and the community as a whole in preventing infant deaths and promoting healthier birth outcomes, particularly in minority communities. While the infant mortality rate is declining in Northeast Florida, rates still remain higher than the state and nation, particularly among African American residents.

In 2015, the provisional Northeast Florida black infant mortality rate — the death of a baby before his or her first birthday — decreased from 8 deaths per 1000 live births to 7.2 deaths. But the racial is significant — black babies are almost three times as likely to experience an infant death than white babies.

The Baby Buggy Walk in the Park launched in Baltimore in 2012 as a pilot project and became one of Baltimore Healthy Start's signature Infant Mortality Awareness Month activities. Since then, it has become a national event celebrated in cities across the county and supported by the federal Office of Minority Health and the National Healthy Start Association.

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 <http://www.facebook.com/nefhealthystart>.

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