



Local Leaders Honored for Excellence in Service and Volunteerism

NEFHSC recognizes four women for improving the lives of young families

Jacksonville, Fla. (Jan. 29, 2025) – Four local leaders were recognized today for their commitment to women and their children by the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition (NEFHSC). Latrina Dowdell and Kim Copeland received the Dorothy Wilson Mabry Legacy Award; Linda Forde was honored with the Philip H. Gilbert Award; and Nina Perez was granted the Carol Brady Community Leadership Award.

All four women serve as advocates for healthy birth outcomes and work closely with NEFHSC and other community organizations to improve the lives of Jacksonville women, babies and their families. The awards, given annually by NEFHSC, recognize outstanding efforts and commitment of community leaders who devote their time, resources and expertise to advancing maternal and child health in Northeast Florida.

“Today we honor these incredible women whose unwavering dedication and compassion have made a profound difference in the lives of countless women and their babies,” said Dr. Mark Hudak, chair of the NEFHSC board. “Their tireless commitment to improving our community at the grassroots level inspires us all and sets an incredible example of the power of service and care.”


2025 Dorothy Wilson Mabry Legacy Award Recipients

Dowdell is the founder of [The 32209 Experience](#), a grassroots organization working to transform the 32209 ZIP Code into a thriving, empowered community. She’s a graduate of NEFHSC’s [Make a Difference! Leadership Academy](#) and serves on Mayor Deegan’s [African American Advisory Board](#) as chair of the Health and Public Safety Committee. Dowdell has been instrumental in collaborating with local housing developments and nonprofit organizations to host monthly food giveaways.

Copeland worked with NEFHSC leadership to establish [St. Thomas Missionary Baptist Church](#) as the site for our [Make a Difference! Leadership Academy](#), one of several NEFHSC programs that train community members to bring attention to the impacts social determinants of health have on infant and maternal mortality. Copeland volunteers time weekly to the training program, helping to continue its growth in Jacksonville.

The legacy award honors Dorothy Wilson Mabry, a longtime community volunteer and advocate who devoted her life to empowering young women and vulnerable families. It honors outstanding accomplishments by a Healthy Start participant or grassroots community leader.

751 Oak St. Suite 610 • Jacksonville, FL 32204 • (904) 723-5422 p

   @nefhealthystart |  <http://nefhealthystart.org>

Saving Babies. Strengthening Families. Building Communities.



2025 Philip H. Gilbert Award Recipient

Forde, a longtime member of [NEFHSC's board of directors](#), is managing partner of [The Forde Firm](#), a Jacksonville-based accounting firm. She has dedicated numerous volunteer hours ensuring NEFHSC's finances are in compliance while solidifying partnerships with a number of community organizations to further our mission. In addition to serving as our board treasurer, she also serves on boards for [Fourth & Gold](#) and [PossAbilities Plus](#).

The voluntary service award is given in honor of the late Philip H. Gilbert, founding chair of NEFHSC and executive vice president of the Duval County Medical Society. The award recognizes outstanding efforts and commitment of a volunteer who is actively involved with NEFHSC or its board of directors.

2025 Carol Brady Community Leadership Award

Perez serves as the early learning national director and Florida director at [MomsRising/MamasConPoder](#) where she's been organizing moms and families for more than 10 years on family economic security issues. She has dedicated her career to ending oppression and exploitation of women and girls.

The community leadership award is named in honor of Carol Brady, a former executive director of the NEFHSC who grew the organization from a small Healthy Start-focused agency within the North Florida Regional Council to a thriving nonprofit serving our five-county region. It recognizes the outstanding commitment of a community leader who has devoted time, resources, funds and expertise to advancing maternal and child health in Northeast Florida.

About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

The NEFHSC leads the community effort to reduce infant death and improve the health of children, childbearing women, fathers and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, view [our media kit](#) or contact Lisa Luther at lisa@createaruckus.com or 904.536.9957. Visit the [Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions](#) for statewide information or the [National Healthy Start Association](#) for national data.

###