



## *Fall 2018 Newsletter*

The Healthy Start Community Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties is part of a state-wide system of coalitions, empowered on the local level, to provide services to pregnant women and their babies, based on the need and the resources of the community.

The Healthy Start Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization led by a volunteer board of directors.

Visit our website

**In fiscal year 2017 - 2018, Healthy Start served **1,454** women throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties!**

*Thank you to ALL the OB/GYN Physicians and Labor and Delivery Hospitals throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties for participating in the Healthy Start Screening Process!*

WORLD'S GREATEST  
BABY  
SHOWER



Thursday, February 28th, 2018  
5:30pm - 8:00pm  
Emerald Coast Convention Center

*It's that time of year again! Are you interested in being a sponsor at our 2019 World's Greatest Baby Shower?*

Please [click here](#) to view our Baby Shower Exhibitor Packet! Space is limited

so get your registration in early!

We are also looking for donations for our door prizes and baby related items to fill our guest gift bags!

Every donation and dollar spent for the baby shower goes towards the health and support of moms, babies, and families in our community.

---

## *A Growing Coalition Brings New Staff Members*

### **Tanya Gonzales, Coordinated Intake and Referral Specialist**

Tanya was brought on board to work collaboratively with the CI&R Manager and participating agency representatives in utilizing a Coordinated Intake and Referral system of care to serve at-risk families in the Okaloosa/Walton County. She will also be an Advisor with the MomCare program that works to ensure that women on pregnancy Medicaid have prenatal care and information about community resources. She is excited to join the team and to help make a difference. Tanya received her Associates of Arts degree through Northwest Florida State College and is pursuing her Bachelor of Arts Interdisciplinary Social Science of Children and Society through the University of West Florida.



Tanya is new to the area, previously from Phoenix, Arizona. She worked in nonprofit organizations for 13 years serving families and their communities. She is passionate about helping others and enjoys providing resources to individuals and families based on their specific needs. In her spare time, she loves to be with her family and enjoys outdoor activities such as fishing, camping, playing sports and now the Florida beaches.

---

## *Several Healthy Start Coalitions Recover from Hurricane Michael*

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Panama City and many surrounding areas took a devastating hit by Hurricane Michael, a category 4 hurricane. Many homes were damaged or destroyed and many people lost everything. Several of our neighboring Healthy Start Coalitions



suffered damage to their offices. The two most effected were Chipola Healthy Start Coalition and the Healthy Start Coalition of Bay Franklin and Gulf (BFG) Counties. Unfortunately, the office in Bay County was unrecoverable and they had to move to a new location.

Amidst all the destruction, the BFG Coalition received a generous donation put together by the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough

County and their community which included baby supplies, diapers, wipes, and pack n plays. Earlier this month our Executive Director, Ardelle Bush, and our Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry, traveled to Panama City to deliver the donations to the BFG Coalition and help them move into their new office. From there, the BFG Healthy Start Coalition will ensure that families in need are able to gain access to these valuable supplies. We are pleased to see the BFG Coalition slowly but surely get back on their feet despite everything they have been through. There is a long road of recovery efforts still ahead. As a coalition we would like to extend our sincerest sympathies and thoughts of support to all those affected by the hurricane.



*Pictured Above: Executive Director, Ardelle Bush and Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry with the staff of the Healthy Start Coalition of Bay Franklin and Gulf Counties!*

## *The success of the Coalition starts with the success of our clients*



My name is Lisa Betts and I have been working with the Healthy Start program for 2 ½ years. I began working as a family support worker making phone calls to newly referred pregnant women and infants to offer them free Healthy Start services that assist them in having healthy pregnancies and healthy children. Recently I was promoted to a H.S. Care Coordinator where I now schedule visits with the referred women and infants and provide them with guidance, education, and resources that benefits their pregnancies and parenting challenges. I love my new position because it is so rewarding! I have had several clients tell me how much they appreciate me and the services I am able to provide.

One client in particular stands out because her pregnancy was creating a lot of self-doubt due to numerous obstacles in her life. As we became more familiar with one another, she became more trusting and shared more of her story with me. It was obvious that she had a difficult childhood which propelled her into making a series of poor choices. One painful and regretful consequence of her poor choices was having her first two children removed from her custody. Since then, she has worked hard to change the direction of her life and has made many positive strides. She is always engaged during our visits where we discuss healthy lifestyles, child birth, breastfeeding, safe sleep environments for babies, positive parenting, and a variety of household management topics. Sometimes building trust is simply a matter of treating a client how you would want to be treated and exercising empathy. Her confidence is growing stronger as she approaches her due date and her belief in me as a trusted source of guidance is personally gratifying. We both look forward to the birth of her baby and continuing our progress as she transitions into the role of motherhood in a stable and nurturing fashion.

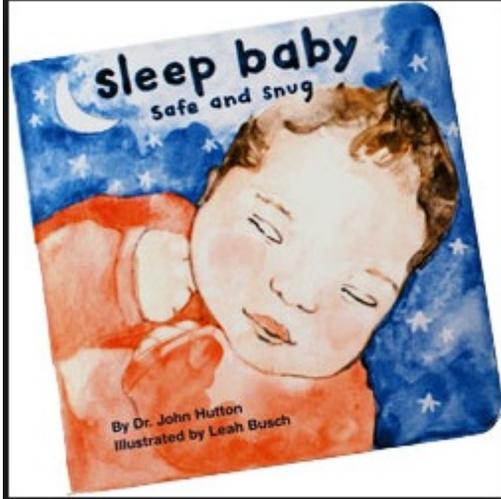
***We would like to thank all the social workers and nurses who serve as our Care Coordinators, they are the true heroes of our organization!***

---

### *Safe Sleep Initiatives*

In Okaloosa County, the leading cause of infant deaths is suffocation due to unsafe sleep practices. This year alone, Okaloosa County has witnessed six infant deaths, five of which are directly related to unsafe sleep practices.

Creating a safe sleep environment for a



baby is as simple as A B C. Any time a baby is sleeping they must be **Alone**, on their **Back**, and in a **Crib!** For more information on safe sleep [click here](#).

One initiative the Coalition has invested in to combat this issue is the Charlie's Kids Foundation book "Sleep Baby; Safe and Snug". The Charlie's Kids Foundation was founded after Sam and Maura Hanke lost their son, Charlie, to SIDS. The foundation's goal is to reduce the SIDS mortality rate through education and awareness. The

book "Sleep Baby; Safe and Snug" was created to teach parents and caregivers about the Do's and Dont's of safe sleep. Because books are often part of the bedtime routine, this board book serves as a safe sleep reminder to be used right before the child is placed in their sleep environment. For more information on the Charlie's Kids foundation please visit [www.charlieskids.org](http://www.charlieskids.org).

The Healthy Start Coalition purchased 3,800 copies of the "Sleep Baby; Safe and Snug" book, 300 of which are in Spanish, and distributed them to four local labor and delivery hospitals in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. These books will be given to all new parents by the labor and delivery staff members for the next year. Our hope is that parents will utilize the Do's and Dont's list and share this book with other caregivers who may be watching their child.

We would like to extend a special thank you to North Okaloosa Medical Center, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Eglin AFB 96th Medical Group, and Sacred Heart on the Emerald Coast for implementing this project in their Labor and Delivery Departments.



*Pictured Above: Nursing Supervisor and Nurses from North Okaloosa Medical Center, Labor and Delivery are excited and ready to hand out the Charlie's Kids book!*

Another way that the Healthy Start Coalition has been working to bring safe sleep education to the community is by setting up Safe Sleep displays in various organizations around our two counties for parents and caregivers to see. We have recently purchased another crib to add to our rotation.

*If those who visit your facility would benefit from the safe sleep education this model provides and you would like to be a host for a few weeks or during a particular event, please [contact](#) us for*

*more information!*



## *Chautauqua Health Care Services Presents the JoAnn Birge Women and Children Center*

Healthy Start's Community Partner, Chautauqua Healthcare Services, has recently opened their new facility the JoAnn Birge Women and Children Center. The center is a voluntary residential program specializing in the treatment of substance use disorders among women who are pregnant, post-partum, and have children under the age of 3 years old.

One of the major barriers associated with receiving residential substance use treatment, among parenting and pregnant women is childcare. This program seeks to overcome that challenge by permitting women to bring their children to treatment with them to motivate them towards behavioral change. The goal of the program is for babies/newborns and children to be raised in an environment that is safe, stable, and substance free. This goal is accomplished through offering a wide array of services to include the treatment of substance use, trauma, and other co-occurring disorders, as well as, life skills training, parenting, employment, educational and vocational training. Additionally, the program seeks to assist families in expanding and utilizing a recovery oriented support system to maintain long term sobriety. The program works with a number of community partners to ensure that the needs of these individuals are met to the fullest extent possible.

As a coalition we are excited to have another facility in our area working to ensure healthy babies are born to healthy moms. For more information on the Jo Anne Birge Women and Children Center please [click here](#).

***Are you interested in Volunteering in your community?***

We are looking for volunteers to help us a few hours every week. Volunteers will help with basic office tasks including but not limited to; preparing our blank prenatal risk screening forms with specific OB/GYN office information, preparing materials for large mailings and other tasks as they arise. Community Services hours can be awarded if needed. For more information or to volunteer please contact our Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry, by phone (850)833-9284 or email at [jordyn@hsow.org](mailto:jordyn@hsow.org)



*From all of us at the Healthy Start  
Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton County*

HAPPY  
*thanksgiving*

Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties | 850-833-9284  
[jordyn@hsow.org](mailto:jordyn@hsow.org) | <http://healthystartokawalton.org/>

*Follow us on Instagram or Like us on Facebook!*

