

NEFLRIC Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

June 2005

Magnolia Project receives additional federal funding to continue prenatal intervention program

The Magnolia Project has been awarded an additional four years of funding to continue its work in the area of prenatal intervention. The funding, which totals \$925,000 annually for the next four years, is part of a larger Healthy Start Grant provided by the United States Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The HSS announced June 22, 2005, that 77 grants worth more than \$80.5 million would be distributed to improve health care for pregnant women and reduce higher-than-average infant mortality rates in targeted communities as part of the Healthy Start, Eliminating Disparities in Perinatal Health program.

The Magnolia Project addresses specific risk factors and service needs. It is unique in its approach because it begins the intervention *prior to pregnancy*. The Project aims at reducing racial disparities in infant mortality by providing targeted outreach, screening, case management and risk reduction, health education and well-woman care in an at-risk area in West Jacksonville. The Magnolia Project is being implemented in an area where a significant proportion of at-risk Black women and families reside; the area accounts for 40% of the Black infant mortality in the city (about 38% of Black births).

The main mission of the Magnolia Project comes from the realization that infant mortality is affected by community health as well as individual risks and behaviors. The Project implements interventions that are directed at both the individual and neighborhood levels. The community-level activities focus on neighborhood development, education and capacity building. As part of a collaborative service delivery model, the Magnolia Project involves the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, the Duval County Health Department, Shands Hospital Jacksonville and other community partners.

The evaluator for the project is the University of North Florida Center for Community Initiatives. The promise of funding for the next four years will ensure continued focus on improving risk factors for women who are not pregnant but may have a future pregnancy and ultimately reduce infant mortalities.

For more information contact Rhonda Baker Brown at (904) 924-1570.

Business Development Corporation will participate in disaster lending program

With hurricane season quickly approaching, Floridians must be especially mindful of necessary precautions to secure their homes and property. However, in the event of a storm-related disaster, the Business Development Corporation of Northeast Florida, Inc. (BDC) will once again participate in a unique disaster bridge loan program aimed primarily at residents in Putnam County.

Last year with money provided by Florida's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) the BDC underwrote over \$100,000 in funds provided for clients affected by Hurricane Jeanne.

With Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster lending expertise through staff members, the BDC will be able to participate with the State to underwrite funds, and advise on SBA disaster lending to current clients and any prospective clients needing funding and assistance through the application process.

The SBA will again offer assistance to home owners and renters to repair or replace disaster damages to real estate or personal property owned by each victim.

For additional information, please contact Steve Hale at (904) 279-0885 X 129.

Technological device will equip Council in responding to emergencies

The planning operations group for emergency preparedness at the Council, recently purchased sixteen Polycom Video Teleconference devices for the Emergency Operations Centers in the Counties of Northeast Florida under the terms of a contract with the Department of Community Affairs.

These devices sit atop existing televisions, are connected to the Internet and enable all the users to see and talk to each other during emergencies. Many disasters are regional events and daily conference calls are already serving as a major coordination tool.

The addition of video capabilities sharpens this tool and improves the quality of communication since considerable information is based in visual media.

One of the units will stay on site at the Council allowing staff to provide counties direct technical support during emergencies. It will also serve as a backup unit to quickly replace any failed unit within our service area.

For more information, please contact Ed Preston at (904) 279-0885 X 155.

Florida KidCare Open Enrollment Now Year Round

Florida families are now able to apply for low-cost, quality health insurance through KidCare without time restrictions for limited enrollment applications. Beginning on June 10, 2005, enrollment is year round.

Florida KidCare is affordable health insurance for children from birth to 18 years old, who do not have health insurance. Most families pay \$15 or \$20 per family per month for those who are eligible. Eligibility is based on income and family size.

Some services covered by KidCare include: doctor visits, check-ups, shots, hospital, surgery, prescriptions, vision, hearing, mental health, emergencies, (in some areas, dental services are also covered).

For additional information, please contact Gwen Houldsworth at (904) 279-0885 X 139.

Regional Leadership Academy focuses on St. Johns River at June meeting

On June 17, 2005, the Regional Leadership Academy met in Flagler County at the Princess Place Preserve to discuss "The River: Our Common Heritage."

Class members were treated to a panel discussion moderated by Jacksonville architect, Ted Pappas, who chaired the Jacksonville Community Council Inc.'s recent study of the St. Johns River. The panel was comprised of Kirby Green, Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District; Neil Armingeon, St. Johns Riverkeeper; and Margaret Jenness, President - North Florida Region St. Joe Company.

In addition, Susan Hughs of the Jacksonville Electric Authority spoke on the topic "Water, Water Everywhere? Regional Solutions and Regional Problems."

The mission of the Academy is to build a strong, diverse, regional network of leaders with a shared commitment to collaboration and to connecting communities to make Northeast Florida a better place to live and work.

The Academy, which held its opening retreat in April 2005, will conclude in November 2005. For more information, contact Brian Teeple, at (904) 279-0885 X 103.