



Baby Business

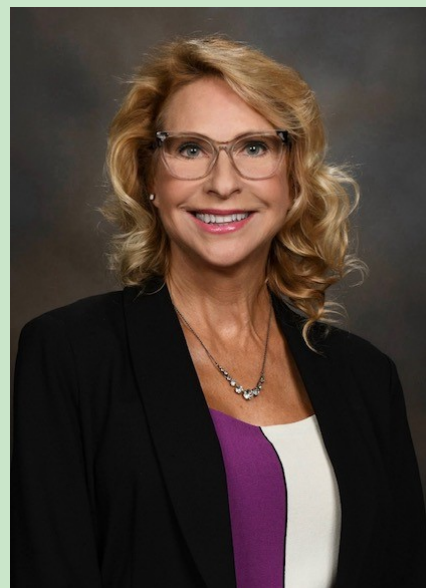
Vol. 4,

2024

A Note From Our Executive Director

Greetings, and thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter.

During the months of May and June, we celebrate Parents and Caregivers. Mother's Day and Father's Day are the two most celebrated family days in the United States. It is a true honor to work for an organization that provides direct services and is committed to supporting our community's parents who have a baby on the way or a child under the age of three.



Parenting is a journey filled with joys and challenges. Even in the best of circumstances, it can be difficult. When coupled with other stressful life events, it becomes even more challenging. During these times, support from others is not just helpful but crucial. Unfortunately, many parents face obstacles caused by stress, language barriers, geographic and social isolation, poverty, and their own adverse childhood experiences that leave them without a positive parenting model, which can impact their ability to fully

support their baby's development during these critical years. Home visiting has been demonstrated to be an effective method of supporting families.

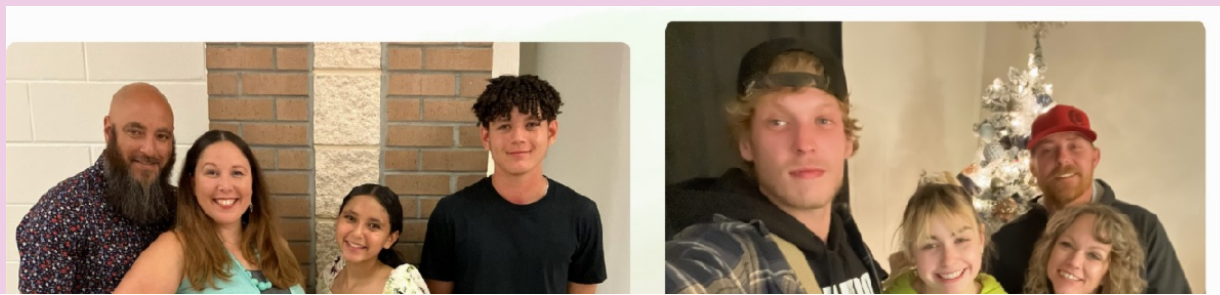
We honor our community's parents this month by hosting a celebratory event entitled The World's Greatest Baby Shower on Tuesday, May 21st @ 5:30 at the Emerald Coast Convention Center. We want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the Mothers, Dads, Grandparents, and Parent figures for all the sacrifices you selflessly make to support your families. Your dedication and love are truly inspiring.

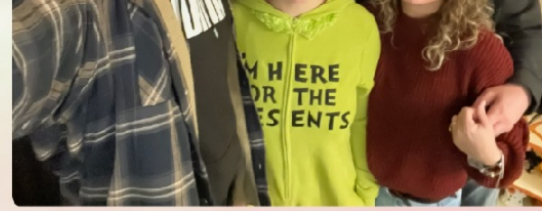
Blessings,
Ardelle Bush, Executive Director

Parent's Creed

- If a child lives with criticism, they will learn to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, they will learn to fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule and shame, they will learn to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance, they will learn to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement, they will learn confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, they will learn to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness, they will learn justice.
- If a child lives with security, they will have faith.
- If a child lives with approval, they will learn to like themselves.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, they will find love in the world.

From our families' to yours, we want to wish you joyful celebrations during the months of May and June as we honor Mothers, Fathers, Grandparents, Parent Figures and Caregivers for their devoted contributions to children's lives.





Office Move & Ribbon Cutting

Grand Opening

You're Invited!

The public is cordially invited to be part of the official opening of the new office location for the Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa-Walton Counties, Inc. The ceremony will be held on September 19th from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at 1130 Eglin Parkway, in Shalimar.

This move was inspired by our recent expansion in programs and services and the desire to provide more valuable services and learning opportunities for our clients and local families.

One of the immediate benefits of our move is that we now have the space to provide all of our employees with their own offices along with plenty of safe parking spaces. Additionally, we now share an office building with the Early Learning Coalition, which is one of our strongest community partners, as we both serve a common demographic. We have already begun our first collaborative initiative together!

Me and My Baby Building Bag consists of activities that supports an infant's brain development.

Come celebrate this important move and show your support for the

Coalition, because every baby deserves a healthy start!



Staff Updates



Asia has a B.S.B.A. in Events Marketing and Management. She is a new Mama and is passionate about health and wellness. She is excited to be back on the team and to help ensure that more healthy babies are born to healthy mothers. She loves being in nature and exploring new places/activities in her free time.

ASIA STATA
Special Projects Coordinator

April has a background in quality monitoring, healthcare performance, and community relations. She



has been married for 27 years and has her first grandbaby on the way. She hopes to empower families to become the best they can be and provide them with the resources to achieve their goals. When she is not at work, you can catch her offshore kayak fishing or just spending time with the family.



APRIL DRAKE
CI&R Specialist



Daniel has a background in law enforcement and youth mentoring. He will be celebrating 21 years of marriage this year and has two children, ages 12 and 16. He is excited to be a coach for T.E.A.M. Dad. His goal is to equip new fathers with the skills and tools that will help them be the best fathers they can be.

DANIEL VEGA
Fatherhood Coach

Abigail has a B.S. in Psychology and is pursuing her Master's degree to become a Licensed Mental Health Counselor. She is passionate about women's health, and is excited to do her part in improving birth outcomes for mothers and babies. In her free time, she loves trying new recipes and playing beach volleyball!



ABIGAIL BAUMANN
Community Liaison

New Baby Brain Develop Initiative

ME & MY BABY BUILDING BAG

Working together to
equip parents, invest in children,
and support our communities



"Infants and toddlers learn about themselves and their world during interactions with others. Brain connections that lead to later success grow out of nurturant, supportive and predictable care." -Sara Gable, Human Development Specialist

In their first three years of life, a child's brain is hard at work, developing synapses that become the foundation for future brain activity. Synapses that are used more often are cemented in the brain's structure, and unused synapses are eliminated. This process dramatically slows from ages 3 to 10, and it is estimated that a child's brain is 85% developed before they reach age 3.

The importance of this early brain development cannot be overstated. Healthy Start and the Early Learning Coalition have the unique and exciting opportunity to equip parents for this important stage in their children's lives. Making the most out of a child's first years has a life-forming impact on the child, the family, and the community.

What's Included?

Inside each Building Bag For Growing Minds and Brains are 40 activities for caregivers to do with their young children. These activities are specifically designed to incorporate and develop skills that are foundational for the young developing minds.

Highlights include:

- Flashcards for language and communication development
- Toys that encourage fine and large motor skills
- 26 affirmation cards to assist with family interconnectedness and relation-forming

The Science Behind the Bag

Caregiver-to-infant talk is critical for strengthening the child's cognitive development, linguistic skills and problem-solving abilities. But not all talk is created equal. Research demonstrates that the *content* and *style* of the language used with infants has a huge effect on their brain's development.

The brain stimulating activities in the Building Bag use research-based best practices to educate and equip parents to use speech effectively with their children.

Our Role

A monumental part of Healthy Start's mission is to equip and support caregivers in being the first and most important teachers in a child's life. Last year, our coalition provided parenting education and support to 629 clients! We will be using Healthy Start home visiting workers, the T.E.A.M. Dad coaches, and community outreach events to get these bags to hundreds of families.

The Early Learning Coalition has a vision to equip children to enter the school system prepared and ready to thrive! Together, our coalitions can achieve incredible results for our community.

Looking Ahead

We have partnered with the Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast to contribute \$34,500 to launch the program. With this partnership, we can get Building Bags into the hands of hundreds of parents in our community!

It's time to get excited! How would our community be transformed if every child started their development on the right foot?



HEALTHY START SUCCESS STORY

MAY, 2024



PICTURED ABOVE;
GWENDOLYN HOWARD, HEALTHY
START CLIENT AND HER BABY,
WILLOW HOWARD



Healthy Start Care Coordinator, Jessica Craig, has developed a close relationship with her Healthy Start client, Gwendolyn Howard.

Gwendolyn was unemployed and expecting her first child as a single mother when she became a Healthy Start client. After giving birth, her daughter also became a client. Since being in the Healthy Start program, Gwendolyn has enrolled at the Emerald Coast Technical College, and will soon graduate with her certification as a Phlebotomy Technician. Her newly acquired skills will enable her to work in blood banks, hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities, drawing blood from patients in preparation for medical procedures. Jessica is very proud of Gwendolyn for taking the forward steps towards enhancing her ability to support herself and her child.





PICTURED ON LEFT; JESSICA CRAIG,
HEALTHY START CARE COORDINATOR



ANNOUNCEMENT

Our next Access Meeting will be held on
June 18th, from Noon-2:30 p.m.

at the Niceville Council Chambers.



Address:
208 Partin Drive North
Niceville, FL 32578

If you are interested in attending or have a work associate that would benefit from learning about helpful resources in our community, please click the link to sign up for Access Meeting invites.

[Access Meeting
Invites](#)



It is time again for the World's Greatest Baby Shower! This annual event will be held on Tuesday, May 21st at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, from 5:30pm-8:30pm. This event is a memorable occasion especially designed for new parents, expectant parents, and their family members! Healthy Start looks forward to hosting this exciting affair that will welcome approximately 1,300 participants. The 50+ informative exhibits, numerous prizes, guest Swag-Bags, and refreshments all add to this lively and fun-filled celebration! Our goal with the World's Greatest Baby Shower is to bring resources to new parents that will help them and their baby succeed, while also showering them with support and congratulations!

Our Top Sponsors



CHILDCARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

- FREE CUSTOMIZED CHILDCARE LISTINGS
- LOCATE FINANCIAL RESOURCE OPTIONS
- CONNECT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

SCHOOL READINESS

- ASSISTS WITH COST OF CHILDCARE
- AVAILABLE FROM BIRTH - 12 YEARS FOR QUALIFYING FAMILIES
- ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR FAMILIES THAT DON'T MEET SCHOOL READINESS REQUIREMENTS

VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN (VPK)

- PREPARES STUDENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN (MUST BE 4 BY SEPT 1)
- AVAILABLE THROUGH A LOCAL CHILDCARE PROVIDER OR PUBLIC SCHOOL
- FREE FOR ALL FLORIDA CHILDREN

SCAN HERE FOR ASSISTANCE PAYING FOR CHILDCARE
WWW.ELC-EC.ORG/PARENTS/SCHOOL-READINESS/



Before all the baby talk, let's talk babies

When you choose to deliver your baby at Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast, our doctors and care teams personalize your care plan to deliver the care that's right for you. And with our Baby-Friendly® designation, on-site Level II neonatal intensive care unit, and connection to the Studer Family Children's Hospital in Pensacola, you and your baby have access to the highest level of pediatric care in the region.

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Must be 18 years or older to join online.



As you grow your family, you join ours.

Just as every baby is unique, so is every delivery. As your partner in care, HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin's Women's and Children's Center provides a customized birthing experience that begins long before your first contraction and continues well after delivery.

Our maternity services include:

- 24/7 midwifery care with a low-intervention birthing experience
- 24/7 lactation support hotline
- Monthly classes, including: birthing, breastfeeding, and infant and child safety/CPR
- Labor and delivery unit tours for expectant moms





You keep them **happy**.
We'll keep them **healthy**.

Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. helps parents
get the **health care** their kids need.





OUR FEATURED PROGRAMS:



PARENTING FOR PREVENTION: Offering evidence-based parenting programs to parents of children birth to teens.



RISE: The Resiliency Increasing Skills and Education (RISE) program provides individual, group, and family support to elementary and middle school students



WFIS: The Women and Family Intervention Services program helps pregnant women ensure their babies are born healthy and drug-free. Services include relapse prevention skill-building.

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Are you looking for Family Resources?

Click the button below for our Family Resource Directory.

If you would like a physical copy or are interested in being added to our next copy, please reach out to abigail@hsow.org.



Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties | 850-833-9284
abigail@hsow.org | <http://healthystartokawalton.org/>

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



Healthy Start is a free program that provides education and care coordination to pregnant women and families with children under the age of three.

Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties | 102 Beal Pkwy SW Suite B | Fort Walton, FL 32548 US

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