



For Immediate Release

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Celebrating Healthy Kids and Active Communities!

Healthy Jacksonville Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (HJCOPC) Recognizes Local Health Heroes for their Work to Prevent and Reduce Childhood Obesity

Jacksonville, FL – September 16, 2013 – On Friday, September 13, 2013, nearly 250 attendees gathered to celebrate healthy kids and active communities. The second annual awards breakfast, hosted by the Healthy Jacksonville Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (HJCOPC), commemorated National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and provided a forum to honor 18 local organizations and individuals for their commitment to helping children grow up healthy throughout Duval County.

In addition to the awards ceremony, emcee Donovan Darius, Donovan Darius Foundation, and keynote speaker Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, Duval County Public Schools, spoke about the importance of good health in supporting our community's children to reach their full potential.

The Coalition also unveiled the latest editions of *Stories from the Field*, a bi-annual report that illustrates the synergy fostered among community partners in their efforts to combat childhood obesity in Duval County, and the *Parent Resource Guide*, that details no-cost or low-cost programs and community assets that promote healthy eating and physical activity offered for local families.

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in communities all across the country. Jacksonville is not immune to the threats posed by the rising rates of overweight children and adults. Based on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, nearly 30 percent of Duval County residents are overweight or obese. According to a report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, medical costs associated with treating preventable obesity-related diseases are estimated to increase from \$48 billion to \$66 billion per year in the United States by 2030, and correlated implications will follow.

To combat this threat, local organizations across Northeast Florida have been collaborating for more than 12 years in efforts to reverse the tide of obesity by increasing access to healthy foods and safe places to play, teaching families how to grow and cook their own healthy meals, and offering opportunities for routine physical activity every day. During the last four years HJCOPC members' services have been delivered to more than 51,000 children and nearly 9,000 adults, and their voices have been heard on many issues affecting our city's built environment and food policies.

"The continuation and expansion of these efforts are imperative to reverse obesity trends," says Lauren Husband, Ed.D, Director, Healthy Jacksonville. "At home, work, schools, in neighborhoods and through city planning and policy, every citizen can take an active role in building a healthy community for our children and for all residents. Please join us this month and throughout the year by celebrating and engaging in the important work of building a healthier community."



The Healthy Jacksonville Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (HJCOPC) is a public-private partnership devoted to reducing and preventing childhood obesity in Duval County. Citizens, business leaders and community organizations work to create healthy environments for children and families through advocacy, education, policy development and cultural changes. www.HJCOPC.org

2013 HJCOPC “Heart of the Community Award Honorees:

Community Leadership Awards

- Amanda Searle, Sustainable Springfield
- Brenda Humphries, Sulzbacher Center
- Cecil Williams, Southern Food Policy Advocates Inc.
- Donovin Darius, Donovin Darius Foundation
- Jennifer L. Brown, S.P. Livingston Elementary
- Katie Salz, Community Garden Initiative
- Representative Mia L. Jones (D), District 14
- Representative Reggie Fullwood (D), District 13
- Steve Mendenhall, Biltmore Elementary, Junior Master Gardener

Organizational Leadership Award

- Chartwells-Thompson School Dining Services
- Episcopal Children’s Services
- Jacksonville Community Council Inc.
- North Florida School of Special Education
- Rotary Club of West Jacksonville and Riverside Rotary Club
- Whole Foods Market

Youth Leadership Awards

- Christina Caster, Biltmore Elementary
- I’m a Star Foundation, Inc.
- Kidz Bite Back, THE PLAYERS Center for Child Health at Wolfson Children Hospital

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