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Title
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“A Life-Saving Table Topic Families Will Be Thankful For”
Statewide Campaign Launched to Reduce Increases in
Premature Births
November is Prematurity Awareness Month

CITY, Fla., November 1, 2011 – Would you please pass the cranberry sauce and the facts?

Just as families are preparing to gather together in celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday, the Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions (FAHSC) and March of Dimes Florida Chapter are launching a campaign as part of Prematurity Awareness Month (November). “*Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait*” is designed to raise awareness about the myths and risks of premature births, as well as educate the public about the importance of maintaining a healthy pregnancy for at least 39 weeks.

According to studies, a growing number of babies are delivered between 37 and 39 weeks. Many of these births occur as a result of planned or scheduled deliveries that are not medically necessary. Nationally, labor induction rates during these weeks have more than doubled from 9.5 percent in 1990 to nearly 23 percent in 2006. In Florida, preterm birth rates increased from 12.8 percent in 2000 to 13.5 percent in 2009. As a result, FAHSC and March of Dimes Florida have teamed up to launch a statewide community education campaign, “*Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait*,” in observance of Prematurity Awareness Month. Hospitals in various Florida cities are also participating in a statewide quality initiative to reduce elective deliveries.

Non-medically required preterm deliveries pose increased risks to an infant’s life including neonatal hospitalizations, death, respiratory stresses, developmental delays and learning disabilities.

“We are pleased to be part of a statewide education efforts to reduce the risk of babies who are affected by late preterm deliveries and non-medically necessary inductions and c-sections,” said **NAME**, Executive Director, Healthy Start Coalition (**CITY**). “There is an alarming misconception among many that a baby is full-term and ready for delivery prior to 39 weeks...so, unfortunately, we see a lot of mothers seeking to schedule C-sections or induced deliveries when there is no medical reason to do so. This campaign will help families in our community understand that the last weeks of pregnancy actually do count.”

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Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. It funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy. The March of Dimes Florida is funding the “*Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait*” statewide campaign.

The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions is a statewide network of 32 Healthy Start Coalitions founded in 1991 that exchange and disseminate resources and information designed to improve maternal and child health. FAHSC was awarded a March of Dimes Florida Chapter Community grant in March to educate Florida women, families, medical professionals and providers about preterm risks.

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