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**Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County is Joining the *GivingTuesday* Movement by Providing Gift Bags to Families within Neonatal Intensive Care Units**

*Orlando, FL, December 2, 2019* – This GivingTuesday, Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County will celebrate giving by providing gift bags to families with babies in local neonatal intensive care units (NICUs).

GivingTuesday, taking place December 3rd, is a global day of giving that harnesses the collective power of individuals, communities and organizations to encourage giving and to celebrate generosity worldwide. Every year, on GivingTuesday, millions of people across the globe (almost 60 countries) mobilize to show up, give back, and change their communities. The goal is to create a massive wave of generosity that lasts well beyond that day and touches every person on the planet.

For GivingTuesday 2019, the Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County will assemble over 500 bags containing unique items and messages of encouragement for families in Orange County NICUs during the month of December. Linda Sutherland, Executive Director of the Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County, and her team, understand how difficult life can be day-to-day for NICU families, felt this annual project would help warm the hearts of families in the hospital during the holiday season. “We want them to feel supported and cared for during this difficult time” she said. These bags will contain thoughtful and special items intended to convey our concern and support and to also let them know that our services are available when they leave the hospital. One gift item for each bag is a unique premature baby cap knitted by volunteers from The Walt Disney Company Blanketeers and by other local textile artists.

This year marks the first time the Healthy Start Coalition will donate bags to all NICU families during the month. To celebrate, Healthy Start will kick-off this initiative by delivering bags first to families at AdventHealth Hospital for Children along with Santa Clause and his elves. Orlando Health Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies and Nemours Children’s Hospital will follow later in the month.

Founded in 2012, GivingTuesday has inspired millions of people to give back and support the causes they believe in. Over \$400 million was raised online in 2018 to benefit a tremendously broad range of organizations, and much more was given in volunteer hours, donations of food and clothing, and acts of kindness.

Those who are interested in joining the Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County’s GivingTuesday initiative can visit [www.facebook.com/healthystartorange](http://www.facebook.com/healthystartorange).

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About the Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County, Inc.

The Florida Healthy Start program was enacted by legislation in 1991 to decrease Florida’s high infant mortality and low birth weight rates and to improve the health of pregnant women and infants. Local Coalitions such as the *Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County* are part of this legislation and work to address local maternal-child health issues and to oversee the provision of Healthy Start services. Florida has seen a 35% decrease in infant mortality rate due in part to the resources and services provided by Healthy Start. Any pregnant woman, including teens, at-risk of poor outcomes and young children age 0-3 at-risk of poor growth and developmental outcomes are eligible for Healthy Start; fathers are encouraged to participate. All receive basic health and community referral information and about one-third go on into more intensive home visiting/educational services.

For more information or to donate, visit [www.HealthyStartOrange.org](http://www.HealthyStartOrange.org).