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FAMILY STUDY CENTER, LAKE MAGGIORE SHORES INITIATIVE WINS AWARD

The USF St. Petersburg Family Study Center (FSC) has teamed up with neighbors of Lake Maggiore Shores, who are making the neighborhood “a great place for babies.” The partnership recently won a competitive award from the The Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg based on the Foundation’s mission to improve the health and well-being of our community through initiatives that create sustainable, effective improvements to quality of life.

The FSC will follow the lead of neighbors of 10th Street South, who over the last year, have been inventing creative ways to make the neighborhood an even more welcoming place for babies. They established the “Neighborbaby Fan Club” to celebrate their youngest neighbors, to include making and delivering “welcome baskets” to each baby who is born or moves onto the block. Through their efforts, neighbors of all ages say they are getting to know one another better and that there is a growing sense of neighborhood spirit.

“The Family Study Center recognizes that this partnership is a special opportunity for the Center and the University,” said James McHale, FSC director. “The efforts of Lake Maggiore Shores neighbors fit with the Center’s vision that every child grows up healthy by being nurtured and supported by their families and communities.”

USFSP’s FSC offers education, training, research and direct services related to co-parenting and infant-family mental health. It also recognizes the importance of community collaborations. For the past decade, it has participated in and cultivated local cross-sector networks to promote early childhood and family well-being.

Funding from the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg will make it possible for Lake Maggiore Shores neighbors to come together around the 170 babies and young children who live in the 40-block neighborhood. It also will provide opportunities to connect with a variety of local services and programs. At the end of the funded year, neighbors will have an opportunity to decide together how they want to



From right: Dr. Allison Pinto and Arlene Johnson, Lake Maggiore Shores parent and activist.

invite local agencies and networks to partner with them in launching an ongoing, long-term place-based initiative.

Residents of Lake Maggiore Shores say the neighborhood is well positioned to lead this year-long readiness initiative, due to its longstanding history of neighborhood activism. Bernice Darling, president of the Lake Maggiore Shores Neighborhood Association, was excited to learn of the award from the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg.

“We are proud to have this opportunity,” said Darling. “It’s a wonderful chance for the neighborhood to reconnect, and come together as a community around a cause that will benefit so many people. I can think of nothing better.”

Allison Pinto, a resident of Lake Maggiore Shores and child psychologist at the USFSP Family Study Center, will serve as the Initiative Director. “We see the brilliance of babies every day on the block. Now we have an opportunity to nurture and harness this brilliance, for the sake of our broader community.” For further information, contact Pinto at apinto@mail.usf.edu or 310-428-7515.

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DATE July 1, 2016

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