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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Infant Mortality Month

ORLANDO, FL. September 17, 2008 - September is National Infant Mortality Month but Florida midwife Jennie Joseph's fight to provide quality prenatal care to all expecting mothers and reduce Central Florida's high infant mortality rate, is a year-round campaign.

"Simply put, our babies are dying! People just don't realize the impact of infant mortality in our communities and so we have launched our **Campaign for Healthier Babies**," states Jennie Joseph, midwife, Executive Director of Commonsense Childbirth Inc. and the founder of **The JJ Way™ Maternity Health Care System**. The campaign is designed to educate the public, community leaders, elected officials and increase awareness of the need to reduce infant mortality.

National agencies such as Healthy Start, March of Dimes and now Rotary International have led the charge by stressing the need to address this serious issue and eradicate the scourge of poor infant health from our communities.

Joseph, a nationally-recognized midwife and leading authority on preventing infant mortality, has developed an innovative model for prenatal care, the 'The JJ Way™', that has successfully demonstrated reduced levels of infant mortality. Joseph also operates The Birth Place, a multi-site birthing center and women's health clinic in Winter Garden, FL. Her compassion and commitment continues to bring needed attention to one of Central Florida's saddest and most preventable medical concerns – the high death rate among Black and Hispanic newborns and babies under the age of one.

Recently published statistics show the infant mortality rate among African-Americans to be more than twice the rate among White babies. In Memphis, Tennessee, a Black baby dies every 43 hours¹ - an unbelievable situation which reflects the trend of a widening disparity between health outcomes for people of color in America. In every community, infant mortality rates must be reduced. "These are not just numbers on a page from yet another spreadsheet," Joseph points out, "rather these statistics represent shattered lives, dashed hopes, and unfulfilled potential as families grieve the loss of *their* loved one."

Medical experts agree the two most prevalent causes of high infant mortality among all women and especially among African Americans, are premature births before the 37th week of pregnancy and low birth weight – newborns weighing less than 5lbs 8 oz. Joseph quickly clarifies that "While both of those indicators are accurate, they are not the cause. The cause is the lack of access to quality healthcare before, during and between pregnancy, as well as a lack of education, support and empowerment during pregnancy."

Every Woman Wants a Healthy Baby and Every Woman Deserves One is the foundation of The JJ Way™ Maternal Child Health System. Joseph's innovative prenatal care program and the program mission is simple: **improve pregnancy and infant health outcomes through access, education and support.** "These women want strong healthy babies just like the rest of us. However, many do not get vital prenatal care, are not told how to nourish themselves or taught how to nurture their babies in the womb. This results in the premature births of low-weight, unhealthy babies."

A 2007 study² of The JJ Way™ health care system documented **no low birth weight babies and no premature babies** for the African American and Hispanic women among the 100 study participants. Other successful efforts and models to address this issue are also being demonstrated around the country and include organizations like the International Center for Traditional Childbearing (www.blackmidwives.org) and a Washington, D.C. health center using midwives that has significantly reduced infant mortality rates in their community.

Jennie Joseph is a British-trained midwife with over twenty-seven years of experience. Her recent book ***'Beautiful! Images of Health, Joy and Vitality in Pregnancy and Birth'*** chronicles the stories of African American women in her practice who have triumphed against the odds and delivered healthy babies. Jennie has become an expert in the field of Black Infant Health and has assisted countless 'at-risk' mothers to deliver full term healthy babies.

Joseph states "Community support, knowledge of the barriers to healthcare and practical solutions are essential to our Campaign for Healthy Babies – please join us. The time to act is now!" Additional information including a video can be found at www.jenniejoseph.com.

¹ **Babyland** documentary - ABC News 20/20 www.abcnews.go.com

²Funded by Winter Park Health Foundation, Evaluated by Health Council of East Central Florida

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