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NEWS RELEASE

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Newly Drug-Free Mother Shares Emotional Story at First Step's Caring Hearts Luncheon Fundraiser.

SARASOTA, FL – March 8, 2010 – Nearly 200 guests attended the recent 7th Annual Caring Hearts Luncheon to benefit First Step of Sarasota's Mother & Infants program. The event raised nearly \$30,000 for the program which provides substance abuse rehabilitation and counseling to pregnant women. To date, 241 healthy, drug-free babies have been born.

Judge Andrew Owens was honored as the "Caring Heart of the Year" recipient due to his many years of dedication to the organization. Judge Owens founded the Drug Court programs in Sarasota and Manatee Counties in 1997. Because of this program, each year an average of 300 individuals receive substance abuse treatment and begin living productive lives without the influences of drugs or the impact of drug-related crimes.

Always an event highlight, a Mothers & Infants client, Tiffany, shared the story of her own addiction and told how, with the help of First Step's Mothers & Infants program, she has hope for a bright, promising future. Tiffany graduated from Mothers & Infants on January 11, 2010 and is now participating in the Salvation Army's F.A.I.T.H. program with her 2-month-old daughter Ahvaya.

First Step of Sarasota has provided high quality, affordable substance abuse treatment and recovery programs on Florida's Gulf Coast for over 40 years. Last year, nearly 14,000 individuals were served through the agency's prevention and treatment programs.

For more information about the Mothers and Infants Program, contact Kelly French at 941-552-2065 or via email at kfrench@fsos.org. You may also visit First Step's website at www.fsos.org.

To arrange an interview with First Step of Sarasota, contact Grapevine Communications at 941-351-0024 or email tlewis@grapeinc.com. Grapevine Communications is an award-winning advertising, marketing, and public relations firm based in Sarasota and serving clients nationwide.

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