

Church supports Healthy Start

An Ocala church congregation helped the Marion County Healthy Start program make Thanksgiving a little better for some Marion County residents.

Members of the Ocala West United Methodist Church congregation donated 50 food baskets to the Healthy Start program at the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. Healthy Start staff distributed the baskets to families who were in need.

“So many families in Marion County can be counted among the working poor,” said Ocala West’s Carol Recknor, who organized the project. “They work hard to make ends meet, but come up short at the end of the month. We’re just glad that we can help.”

The church congregation adopted Marion County’s Healthy Start program for the Thanksgiving holiday. Church members took a special food collection, gathering nonperishable food items and other supplies to help families who were enrolled in Healthy Start.

“Like many public health programs, Healthy Start relies on partnerships to be truly effective,” said Lynne Hough, Healthy Start program supervisor. “We are grateful to Ocala West for their generosity, and we know the families who benefit from the Healthy Start program are grateful as well.”

Healthy Start program staff drove a caravan of trucks and vans to the church to meet the leaders of the project and pick up the food baskets. Department staff and church staff and volunteers were able to meet as partners in helping residents for the holiday. Mayra Usme, Healthy Start case manager, helped pass the food baskets on to families.

“Many of our clients struggle just to get by,” said Usme. “When the holiday comes, they have nothing extra to celebrate with. The gift baskets mean so much to these families.”

The church isn’t the only community group that donates to Healthy Start clients. Residents of Salt Springs Village, a retirement community in northeastern Marion County, donates handmade baby quilts to the program each year.

Calendar

Dec. 9

- WIC Breastfeeding class

Dec. 11

- Health department closed for training

Dec. 25

- Health department closed for Christmas



Department of Health photo
Ocala West Methodist church members and staff surround one of several truckloads of goods donated to Healthy Start clients. From left to right, Norm Recknor, Pat Bevis, Jennifer Harner, Michael Sims, Carol Recknor, Mary Ann Curry, Jerry Curry and Bobby McGinnis.

Healthy Start helps pregnant women, women who are between pregnancies, infants, and children up to age 3. Healthy Start provides education, resource information, case management and care coordination services in order to improve birth outcomes and decrease infant mortality. Healthy Start staff members visit families in their homes, providing customized care. Services are voluntary and free to qualified families.

“The program tries to address the many needs women and babies have,” said Hough. “Access to health care and community resources help care for their physical needs. Education classes, support groups and counseling services provide more tools to help families succeed. We partner with a variety of agencies on issues that impact families in our community.”

Healthy Start is open from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment, call 352-629-0137, ext. 2275.



Flu prevention time!

With National Influenza Vaccination Week starting Sunday, find the time to get vaccinated

With November gone and the holiday season in full swing, is it too late to get the seasonal flu vaccine?

“On the contrary, this is the perfect time to get your flu vaccine,” said Jan Stepp, Immunization Clinic supervisor for the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. “With families getting together for the holidays, getting vaccinated now can help people enjoy their holiday, instead of spending it in bed sick.”

National Influenza Vaccination Week begins on Sunday, a nationwide effort to remind everyone of the importance of the influenza vaccine.

In Marion County, efforts are underway to get the flu vaccine to public school students. The Department and Marion County Public Schools partnered with Healthy Schools LLC this week to offer free flu vaccinations to every student at every school over a two-day period. Hundreds of students were vaccinated.

Emergency departments in Marion County are seeing a rise in flu-like illnesses, which is common this time of year. Nearly 450 people have reported to emergency departments with symptoms so far this flu season, up from about 325 for the same time last season.

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Vaccination is particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza, such as pregnant women, children under the age of 5 and people with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease. Two recent influenza-associated pediatric deaths in Orange and Pasco counties are examples of how serious seasonal flu can be.

An annual flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu and flu-related complications. Health experts across the country recommend that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine.

Since flu viruses are constantly changing and immunity can decline over time, annual vaccination is needed for optimal protection, even during years when the viruses the vaccine protects against remain the same as the previous season.

Getting a flu vaccine is more convenient than ever before. Children and youths up through age 18 who are uninsured, underinsured, or otherwise do not have medical coverage for flu vaccinations can get free flu vaccines at the department.

“Getting children vaccinated can help keep them from missing school due to the flu,” said Stepp, “and help keep parents from missing work while they care for their kids. Any children who missed the vaccination program at school this week can come to the Immunization Clinic and get protected.”

(Continued on page 3)

Need Info? Call 352-629-0137

Birth & Death Certificates ext. 2064
Communicable Diseases ext. 2088
Dental Clinic 352-622-2664
Environmental Health ext. 2086

Family Planning ext. 2091
Health Education ext. 2195
Healthy Start ext. 2275
HIV/AIDS ext. 2073
Immunizations ext. 2017

Maternity ext. 2089
School Health ext. 2043
Sexually Transmitted Diseases ext. 2073
WIC & Nutrition ext. 2124

Department recognizes World AIDS Day

December 1 is widely recognized as World AIDS Day and the Florida Department of Health joins community partners across the state to highlight the importance of HIV testing. This year's theme, "Focus, Partner, Achieve: An AIDS-free Generation", offers an opportunity to reflect on progress made to eliminate HIV infection as well as a focus on providing awareness and education about HIV/AIDS.

"World AIDS Day provides a platform to encourage everyone to get tested and to know their status," said Dr. Celeste Philip, Deputy Secretary for Health and Deputy State Health Officer for Children's Medical Services.

"We know that effective treatment prevents further transmission of the virus and will help bring an end to HIV/AIDS."

Over the past 30 years, tremendous progress has been made in the prevention and treatment of HIV infection. There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of babies born infected with HIV as well as a decrease in the number of HIV-related deaths. Although the prognosis for people with HIV/AIDS has improved, with many now living long and productive lives, statewide and local efforts continue to exist in order to address current challenges.

In the U.S., 1 in 6 HIV-infected adults aren't aware of their status.

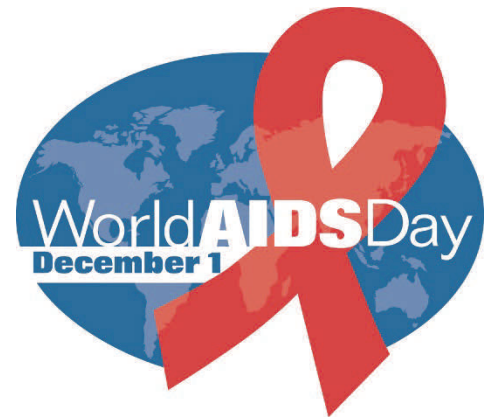
Each year more than 50,000 people in the U.S. become infected with HIV; over 4,000 in Florida.

More than 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV; more than 106,000 in Florida.

HIV is the second leading cause of death among black women and the fifth leading cause of death among Hispanic women.

Men account for 70 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS in Florida.

The Florida Department of Health has developed a comprehensive program for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and for providing care and treatment to those already infected. This comprehensive approach includes HIV surveillance, education, prevention, counseling, testing, care and treatment. For more information please visit www.FloridaAIDS.org.



Flu prevention time! *(Continued from page 2)*

Adults can get the annual flu vaccine at many locations in Marion County. Major drug store chains offer the shots, as well as pharmacies located in grocery stores and retail outlets. Or contact your health care provider.

To find out if your child is eligible for free vaccines, call the Department's Immunization Clinic at 352-629-0137, ext. 2017. The clinic is open 8 a.m.–4:15 p.m. weekdays.

Connect with the Florida Department of Health online