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NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK PROMOTES GOAL OF HEALTHIEST NATION IN ONE GENERATION

Florida Department of Health in Marion County promotes health throughout the awareness week



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Ocala, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County is marking National Public Health Week, April 4–10, with announcements of awards, proclamations and events designed to expand Marion County’s awareness of what contributes to community health.

Safe, healthy communities

On Tuesday, the department will present the **Healthy Weight Community Champion Award** to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. “Health must be a priority in designing our communities,” said Erin Hess, Health Officer at the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. “The county commission, as well as the cities of Belleview, Ocala, and others, are helping to lead their employees and residents to healthier lifestyles.”

The **Safe Kids Marion County coalition** will also promote health at Tuesday’s commission meeting with a proclamation promoting National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Partners all across Marion County have planted blue pinwheel gardens in front of their facilities to raise awareness, and Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Education Program manager Meaghan Crowley will represent Safe Kids at the board meeting. “We need lower levels of violence and crime so everyone can safely live, work, learn and play,” said Crowley. “The Safe Kids partnership is grateful to the community for their support in giving our children the strong, nurturing environment they need in order to thrive.”

Relationship between poverty and health

Poverty limits access to healthy foods and safe neighborhoods and, more education is a predictor of better health as well. The Department is **joining with the United Way of Marion County April 7–8 to present *Understanding Poverty***, a free seminar to help the community understand how poverty can create communication barriers, and how to overcome them. “Poverty and poor health go hand-in-hand,” said Hess. “Understanding the unhealthy stresses poverty can put on adults and children can help leaders, service providers and the community as a whole improve access to needed resources.” Reservations are required for this free seminar. Sign up by contacting Faith Beard at the United Way of Marion County, 352-732-9696, ext. 206, or FBeard@uwmc.org.

Encouraging public service

Hess will speak to high school juniors and seniors April 4 at the **Youth United Way program**. The students learn about local nonprofit organizations, and gain tools they can use to advance beyond school. Hess will give the students information on how public service can make lasting

contributions to the health of an entire community, and how her career path brought her to Marion County as the department's health officer.

National Public Health Week is a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving the community.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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