

Community health depends on community voices

LOVN CHAT Meeting Summary December 11th, 2009 8:30 am

Present: Hilary Woodcum; Amy Paulishak, Richard Rogers, Mary King, Shannon Thinnis, Carolyn Stephens, Lori Wilder, Diane Ramseyer

Welcome and Introductions – Hilary Woodcum served as chair for this meeting today, and opened with welcome and introductions.

Presentation – Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Programs in Community
Amy Paulishak, United Way Services of Sarasota County, shared information on this program. About 45% of children in Sarasota County are on free or reduced cost lunch in the schools. This indicates that there are many families in the community who could qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit, but are not filing for it. The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is trying to reach as many of these families as possible, helping them complete the tax returns. Income levels have been increased in the past year, making EITC even more accessible to families.

The program is also trying to educate the community on predatory Tax Refund Anticipation Loans. Not all refund anticipation loans are predatory, but some may consume as much as 50% of a tax refund and market to families as money for Christmas gifts, etc.

Locations in South County are at the South County Family YMCA in Venice and Englewood, Laurel Park Community Center, North Port YMCA and North Port City Hall.

Amy also indicated that AARP does tax preparation through volunteers as well, and they work together in community outreach for the programs. Appointments are now being scheduled and will start January 14th. Additional information and schedules for locations can be found through 2-1-1 as well.

Update Volume II DVD – Healthy Eating – Work continues on editing the DVD, one more scene needs to be taped. Once the editing is complete, it will require audio work to add the narration. This process is longer than anticipated, so the group was asked to consider that it may take 1-2 more months – but, will be complete in time for National Nutrition Month.

Update on Operation Medicine Cabinet – Venice Community, as well as all of Sarasota, responded very well to the first Operation Medicine Cabinet. Venice was the highest participation with just under 100 attendees, and North Port followed with 70-80. 877 lbs.

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were taken for incineration. Diane helped at the Venice location on behalf of the LOVN CHAT.

NOPE – Hilary attended the training for this program (Narcotics Overdose Prevention Education) – which will be held in all middle and high schools as part of the Sheriff's Prescription Drug Diversion Task Force. Group discussed the continuing issue of substance abuse among youth and seniors. Some of the new initiatives locally, and state-wide are connected to the actions of community members who participated in the Addiction Community Workshop sponsored by the LOVN and North Port CHATs in partnership with PAST (family support group) in November 2007.

Next CHAT meeting – January 8th – 8:30 pm Venice Library