



Press Release

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Health District Kicks Off Wellness Campaign

Galveston County and Cities – The Galveston County Health District is launching a new wellness campaign to help Galveston County residents get on the path to active living and healthier lifestyles.

According to the District, heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States, which is also true in Galveston County. In fact, Galveston County's death rate from heart disease exceeds the state average.

Galveston County Health Authority Dr. Mark Guidry says, "The real killers from heart disease are from behaviors such as inactivity, high fat and salt diets, and tobacco use. Recent 2011 county health rankings show that the percentages of Galveston County adults who are obese and who smoke exceed the statewide averages."

Guidry adds that being well is important because "being sick isn't fun and it carries a big cost." Healthcare inflation impacts the entire healthcare system as well as the cost of premiums for the insured. Sick care costs can be reduced through wellness.

Achieving a sense of well-being is done differently by different people, as there is no "cookie-cutter" approach. Variety is also needed due to the many dimensions of wellness - physical, emotional, mental and environmental to name a few. Wellness behaviors may range from various forms of physical activity, low fat and salt diets, various forms of relaxation, getting annual physicals, to having a sense of community and social support.

To kick off the campaign two billboards are being erected to increase public awareness. The boards, one located on I-45 near Dickinson Bayou and the other on SH146 in the Bacliff area, depict a person celebrating having achieved wellness and ask the question, *Well... RU?* A primary goal of the billboard is to introduce a new website: www.wellRU.org. This website offers free tips and

tools to help individuals and families in Galveston County improve their health and well-being.

GCHD hopes that their new effort will help people understand that well care is not sick care. It is what people do to prevent illness and premature death. Wellness is a *healthy* sense of well-being.

Some of the tools accessible at www.wellRU.org include a Body Mass Index (BMI) calculator, calories counter, fast food calorie counter, fruits and vegetables calculator, healthy recipes, and information on the USDA's "Choose My Plate" program which has replaced the food pyramid. In addition, the site includes resources on healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco cessation, holistic and alternative resources, healthy kids, healthy seniors and worksite wellness.

District officials hope this first step in its campaign will stimulate community and worksite conversations about wellness. In the future, the district plans to convene a forum of community leaders to discuss local wellness resources available to county residents and plan how best to coordinate those resources for the benefit of the public.

Guidry says, "The launch of WellRU is just one important step towards helping people realize the importance of staying well. I believe that working together with community partners, we can improve the well-being of more residents and make measurable differences in community health outcomes such as heart disease."

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