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Make health happen, join in the Community Health Interactive

The first annual Community Health Interactive is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Chelsea Center, 2506 Gulf Gate Drive in Sarasota. Lunch will be provided. The event, a project of the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP), will be led by Donna Petersen, MPH, SCD, Dean of University of South Florida's College of Public Health. The goal of the Interactive is to encourage creative collaborations around three key priority health issues in our community: increasing access to healthcare, improving chronic disease management, and encouraging active, healthy lifestyles. At the end of the half-day event, participants will have created a web of innovative ideas and existing resources. This will be a starting point to help us understand how to best connect like-minded groups and encourage collaborative efforts to create a healthier Sarasota County.

Some people may view a healthy community as one with quality healthcare options, low disease rates, and plenty of opportunities to be active. To others, it is a place with thriving community gardens or a high-tech system for sharing health information. Research shows that collaboration is a key to creating a healthy community. There are many active groups in Sarasota County working on similar issues and have common goals to improve health in our community. However, when groups collaborate, that work has the potential to make a greater impact, while being more innovative, and more responsive to the needs of the community.

Through its Health System Collaboration Committee, CHIP is working to foster community connections to promote health. Recently, the committee joined with members of The Community Alliance of Sarasota County to identify three key health priority areas as needing more community attention and action: increasing access to healthcare, improving chronic disease management, and encouraging active, healthy lifestyles. The Community Health Interactive is an important first step in the planning effort to more effectively address these issues.

The forum is being jointly sponsored by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice. A number of partnering organizations have also been involved in the planning effort, including The Community Alliance of Sarasota County, the Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Wellness Coalition, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, SCOPE, the South County Family YMCA and the University of South Florida College of Public Health.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Community Health Interactive.

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The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) is a community-led effort to improve the health of Sarasota County residents. CHIP also works with Charlotte and DeSoto counties to foster change in health systems across the region. CHIP is funded by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Government, Doctors Hospital, DeSoto County Health Department, Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System, Venice Regional Medical Center, Peace River Regional Medical Center, Fawcett Memorial Hospital, and Englewood Community Hospital.

Seating is limited. Register on-line by visiting www.Chip4health.org/interactive. For more details, call Kari Ellingstad, MPH, at 941-861-2867 or e-mail her at Kari_Ellingstad@doh.state.fl.us.

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