



FAMU Center for Health Equity Teams Up to Address Needs of Underserved Communities

By: FAMU

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (COPPS) Center For Health Equity is partnering with the Florida Department of Health (DOH) - Leon County, the Tallahassee Branch of the NAACP, and the Florida State University College of Medicine to launch what organizers are calling a “family kitchen table meeting.” The meeting is designed to give a voice to residents of Greater Frenchtown and the Southside area – two neighborhoods traditionally overlooked when it comes to health care.

The newly formed Community Advisory Council (CAC) will host its first event on Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Breakfast and lunch will be served to residents who wish to come and talk around the kitchen table about their neighborhood’s health needs at the Richardson-Lewis Clinic Building at 872 W. Orange Avenue in Tallahassee.

“We need people who have a mission, who say, ‘I want to be heard, I want to make progress, I want to make changes!’” said Cynthia Seaborn, chair of the Tallahassee NAACP Health Committee.

According to COPPS Dean Michael Thompson, PharmD, the first meeting will be an opportunity to meet with neighbors over coffee to discuss the goals and future of the council.

“We must not remain tone-deaf to our neighbors’ concerns. The Community Advisory Council is a very important step in changing the status quo,” Thompson said. “We will do whatever we can to support current leaders and help grow new leaders.”

According to DOH-Leon Health Officer Claudia Blackburn, RN, MPH, the Council encourages dialog that must occur to ensure healthier communities.

“Leaders and citizens both agree that our agencies need to hear feedback from residents about life-altering issues, and we must work with them to find solutions,” Blackburn said. “We must open our ears and help our residents make the changes they want and need to create a healthier place to live, work, play, and pray.”

Blackburn added, “Custom has it that the kitchen is the heart of the home—where nurture is natural and nature is shaped, where talk and ideas flow freely and where every member of the family has a say in the running of their everyday lives. The heart of the home is where leaders grow, and goals are born. That’s what we hope for, for CAC.”

According to local NAACP President Dale Landry, the event gives members of the neighborhoods affected most by health disparities a chance to express their concerns and needs.

“This is the beginning of an era of self-determination and self-progress,” Landry said. “Too often we have seen others try to define disparities in health-impacting minorities, who are neither minority nor have the best interest of the health of minorities in mind. This [Council] is the first step to providing an opportunity for minorities to take an active role in determining what health disparities are impacting them and to take the lead in defining how best to correct it.”

Les Beitsch, M.D., chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine at FSU’s Center for Medicine and Public Health, echoed Landry’s sentiments.

“Gone are the days when doing what’s best for a group of people precludes their input,” Beitsch said. “The sponsoring groups of CAC will be a sounding board and technical advisor for the voices of Greater Frenchtown and the Southside area. Good ideas don’t just come from afar. Good ideas come from kitchen table talks with friends, family, and neighbors over cups of coffee and glasses of tea.”

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