

PRESS RELEASE

FSU College of Medicine Takes Part in Local Activities for Cover the Uninsured Week

May 1, 2004

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By Meredith Brodeur

TALLAHASSEE, FL -- Alma Littles, M.D., associate dean for Academic Affairs for the FSU College of Medicine, joined local and statewide health officials on May 10 in a town hall meeting that kicked off events in Tallahassee for Cover the Uninsured Week. Cover the Uninsured Week is a national campaign to annually promote the goal of affordable health coverage for all Americans. The goal is to make it a national priority to find solutions for the nearly 44 million Americans with no health insurance. Littles joined Cecil Wilson, M.D., a member of the American Medical Association Board of Trustees; J.R. Richards, CEO of Bond Community Health Center; Mary Nzeribe, executive director of Neighborhood Health Services; and Steve McArthur former chairman of the Leon County Healthcare Advisory Council and current CareNet advocate, in a panel discussion about the issue of uninsured Americans on both a local and national level. Locally, more than 31,000 people in Leon County are uninsured. Littles, who had a family medicine practice in Quincy, FL, for years and is former director of the Tallahassee Memorial Hospital Family Practice Residency program, emphasized the need for individuals to have a primary care physician, which she said could prevent them from major medical consequences. "When a patient goes for a well-child or well-adult checkup, if a symptom develops, physicians can take care of it ahead of time," Littles said. Littles said the town hall meeting was successful in bringing together members from the health care community as well as members of the public to discuss the issue. "The town hall meeting provided a great forum for health care and community leaders from local, state and national organizations to hear and share concerns of the uninsured with individuals directly affected by the lack of adequate health insurance," she said. "While it wasn't a forum to develop solutions, it did give us the opportunity to share those programs in the community that have already proven successful and help educate the public on how to access them. It also provided ideas for future program development." The College of Medicine also provided speakers for the local Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club meetings in an effort to increase awareness on the impact of the issue of the uninsured upon the business community. The town hall meeting was followed by a week of activities including health fairs, an interfaith breakfast and a poster contest for school-aged children to focus on the importance of good health and regular doctor's visits. Cover the Uninsured Week in Tallahassee was sponsored by Leon County's primary health care program, CareNet, a coalition of local hospitals and clinics. Other participants included the FSU College of Nursing, the American Red Cross and the United Way.