

Local campaign launched to prevent freezing deaths

Written by gallupsun

Friday, 15 November 2019 16:22

One freezing death is too many during the cold season in Gallup.

So, to help put an end to this seasonal crisis, Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services' Behavioral Health Collaborative and seven collaborative behavioral health service members have launched their annual campaign to create awareness for residents in danger of freezing to death in Gallup-McKinley County's numerous arroyos and pedestrian areas.

The group is building awareness by having the hospital's WellSpring Recovery Center and Community Work Service Program members fan out across Gallup in November, distributing flyers to businesses for posting in store front windows.

The 8.5" x 11" sign's sober black and blue-print alerts residents of "exposure deaths" and urges them to help save lives by watching for impaired people.

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“Watch for impaired people in the evenings. Don’t let them freeze to death. They need shelter for the night. Ignoring them is neglect,” the sign advises.

The sign then advises residents to call McKinley County’s Metro Dispatch at (505)722-2231 for physical assistance and transportation to Gallup’s detox center at the Na Nihzhoozhi Center, Inc., 2201 Boyd Ave., or 911 for a medical emergency.

Metro Dispatch will launch a new dispatch software system in mid-November that will greatly assist the campaign. The system offers proximity dispatching, which maps out calls for service and officers' locations so dispatchers can quickly match units to specific calls. It also helps identify which jurisdiction a call is in, so dispatchers know which law enforcement agency to notify.

“We have zero tolerance for people dying from exposure,” says Juliana Dooley, RMCHCS’s Behavioral Health Collaborative Coordinator. “If you see something, do something. All it takes is a phone call and a location. You don’t even have to wait for Metro’s van to arrive, you have done your part.”

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While the hospital's employee's will be delivering the flyers to businesses, she also invites establishments to call her directly at (505)726-6851 and she will ensure delivery of the fliers to any business.

In the past, the group's efforts enabled many residents to escape exposure and saved numerous lives. According to Gallup Police Department, four residents died from hypothermia in 2017 and three died in 2018. So far in 2019, there have been no deaths from hypothermia reported.

CHAMBER ASSISTS CAMPAIGN

While Dooley and her group are busily soliciting Gallup's businesses to place the flyers in conspicuous locations on their premises, the Gallup-McKinley Chamber of Commerce is aiding her efforts by emailing its 350 members and urging them to participate in the advertising campaign.

"The Gallup-McKinley Chamber of Commerce is partnering with RMCHCS, the City of Gallup

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and other members of the collaborative to help prevent residents from freezing to death this winter," said Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce CEO Bill Lee. "We welcome this opportunity and urge members to post the flyers we have sent them. We are asking they be prominent and posted in appropriate windows and other publicly accessible display areas in your establishment."

Kevin Foley, Ph.D., executive director of NCI, stated the center offers indoor comfort mats for sleeping to those needing shelter for the night. His facility can offer accommodations for up to 150 detoxing, treatment and shelter people. He also noted that the shelter's hours of operation are from 6 pm during winter and those requiring shelter will be provided breakfast.

"We are here to help anyone desiring to end their addiction," Foley said. "We encourage people to visit our facility when they are ready, and we will provide treatment to help them begin a new life."

POLICE DEPARTMENT SAVING LIVES

The Gallup Police Department oversees the metro dispatch van which will assist residents needed help.

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"Anybody can call Metro Dispatch or 911 if they observe anyone laying on the ground and obviously in need of assistance, especially during inclement weather," Gallup Police Chief Franklin Boyd said. "Skilled dispatchers are trained to quickly dispatch emergency services as well as aid and transportation to NCI, where those needing help can remain sheltered for up to 72 hours."

Boyd added that the police department has implemented some life-saving strategies to try and eradicate these tragic and unnecessary deaths, especially with the help of the department's dedicated, hard-working community service aides. He credits the aides with having literally saved countless lives.

"It is not uncommon for them to locate near frozen people in places they would not have been found otherwise had they not literally walked these cold, dark and hidden areas well after midnight in freezing temperatures," Boyd said. "So far, these unfortunate deaths are showing a strong decline and we have had no deaths due to exposure this year, but temperatures have also just begun to drop."

ABOUT RMCHCS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

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The RMCHCS Behavioral Health Collaborative was formed to broaden support for alcohol and substance abuse prevention efforts by organizing, educating and empowering local providers, community service representatives, and city, county and state agencies on a variety of topics.

Other key amenities include education, housing and transportation. Through numerous culturally appropriate workshops and seminars, the Behavioral Health Collaborative has helped its stakeholders generate renewed activity on behalf of the community.

Many of the workshops have targeted an audience of providers, but others were designed to speak directly to the local population, providing a link to support for those suffering from physical and mental abuse; those in need of improved parenting skills or family support; and those contending with grief or suicidal thoughts.

The Behavioral Health Collaborative works with the Gallup Indian Medical Center and Navajo and Zuni Tribal authorities to gather and share information regarding the state of Native American healthcare.

By William Madaras/For the Sun



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**WE NEED YOUR HELP TO SAVE LIVES
THIS WINTER**

Watch for impaired persons in the evening.
Don't let them freeze to death.
They need shelter for the night.
Ignoring them is neglect.

Call Metro Dispatch: 505-722-2231
or if it is a medical emergency,
call 911 and wait for help to arrive.

Let's save lives this winter!

RMCHCS Regional Health Collaborative Participating Members

RMCHCS Behavioral Health Collaborative • Metro Dispatch • Rescue Center • Mobility Collaborative for Health Equity
Wall Spring Recovery Center • Midway County Community Support Department • Will Social Justice & Equity Institute

