

Community Solutions Plan enables residents to become more self-sufficient

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**This is the third installment of a four-piece series. For more background on Community Solutions, please see the initial article in our August issue.*

Community Solutions, a project facilitated by United Way, has a vision to improve people's lives by creating lasting change in community conditions. To achieve that vision the Community Solutions plan has four community outcomes: education, safety, health and self-sufficiency.

The outcome statement for health is as follows: People will live healthy lives through emphasis on prevention, as well as access to needed healthcare. Outcome number one is to increase the number of people who practice preventative healthcare. The second outcome is to decrease the number of people treated for preventable diseases and outcome number three is to increase the number of people who have access to quality, affordable and timely healthcare.

The Neurological Center, located on Swift Blvd. in Richland received funding for two programs, \$17,000 for Healthy Brain, Healthy Life and \$7,000 for Caregiver Health Promotion. The major short-term outcome for the Caregiver Health Promotion program is that caregivers will have strategies to help prevent illness and maintain physical and mental health. The Caregiver Health Promotion is made up of caregiver support groups as well as educational programs, said executive director Karen Hayes.

One educational program is called Building Skills and Knowledge and Learning How to Take Care of Yourself as a Caregiver. The event is Oct. 25 with two sessions, one geared more towards professional caregivers and one more towards family caregivers, Hayes said. "But people are welcome to attend both," said office coordinator, Heidi Hill.

Session times are from 9:30 a.m. until noon and 1:00-3:30 p.m. The event will feature Teepa Snow, a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association. "She's presented for us before, a couple years ago, and she was very popular," Hayes said. The number of people to be served by the Caregiver Health Promotion is 200.

With Healthy Brain, Healthy Life, Hayes said, "We're hoping to target children and teens and adults at risk for neurological disorders and really to give them the strategies to prevent brain injury and to maintain and improve their brain health." The Neurological Center secured Daniel G. Amen, an international speaker, best-selling author and brain enhancement expert for an early October event that had two sessions, one geared towards helping maintain improved brain health and another where parents and children learned about preventing brain injuries, such as those which could occur during sports for example.

"And we think we'll be drawing on a population we don't currently service and who don't know about the organization," Hill said.

The number of people to be served by the Healthy Brain, Healthy Life program is 300.

Also under the health focus for the Community Solutions Plan is the YMCA

of the Greater Tri-Cities, which received \$18,500 (\$9,000 for 2008-2009 and \$9,500 for 2009-2010) for its Martin Luther King Center Youth Sports program, said marketing director Michelle Rankin. The sports program targets a population generally at higher risk for obesity, diabetes and heart disease, Rankin said. "This population generally cannot pay for YMCA Youth Activities and this funding will directly provide programming at low cost for east Pasco residents," she said.

The major short-term outcome for this program is that youth will gain lasting health benefits by incorporating exercise promoted by youth sports. The program will serve 500 people.

The YMCA of the Greater Tri-Cities also received \$21,000 (\$10,000 for 2008-2009 and \$11,000 for 2009-2010) for the Martin Luther King Center Health and Wellness program. This program provides ongoing opportunities for individuals to learn and incorporate healthy exercise and nutrition choices into daily life, Rankin said. "By offering organized active games and classes, participants learn that incorporating exercise into daily life is both fun and rewarding," she said.

The program targets all age groups and provides afternoon activities for youth, open access to the weight room and exercise classes such as yoga, beginning weight lifting and walking groups. Nutrition and health information is provided to youth and families through this program as well, Rankin said.

The Tri-Cities Chaplaincy received \$34,173 in funding for fiscal years 2008/2009 from United Way for Cork's Place. Cork's Place provides grief support

services for children between the ages of three and 18 who have experienced a death in the family, said program coordinator Susan Nelson. "And by family I mean it can be an uncle, an aunt, a mom, a dad, a sibling or maybe a really close friend who was like a dad," Nelson said.

Cork's Place meets during the school year and currently has 29 kids enrolled, though intake calls come in every day, Nelson said. This open-ended group allows people to come in at any time and they can stay as long as needed, so children are constantly coming in and out of the program.

The major short-term outcome for Cork's Place is that children will reestablish academic functioning and decrease behavior problems. Cork's Place received funding under the health category, because grief is a full-body experience - emotional,

spiritual and physical - and many times, children don't have anywhere for that grief to go, Nelson said. "So they end up having actual physical ailments, headaches, stomachaches, they can't eat, they lose weight...and it starts to affect their school performance," Nelson said.

Many times, Cork's Place gets referrals because children are not feeling well, are not able to focus and maybe their grades have started to drop and they are getting in trouble in school, distracting other kids. "And that's all grief, so they come to us and we help them work through that," she said. This involves peer-to-peer support groups.

A peer-to-peer support group for caregivers is also provided while the children are at Cork's Place. "So they're getting the help from the other people in the group that are going through the same thing."




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