



Posted: Tuesday, August 24, 2010 11:56 am
By: Barry Porterfield

Better health goal of area group

Pauls Valley and Garvin County residents will soon get their say in an organized effort to start improving the collective health of those living here.

That effort begin later this week with a meeting in PV on virtually all aspects of health and health concerns.

The idea is to get the input of residents on what those concerns are as the effort moves to step one on forming a health coalition here.

Julie Selman, health educator for the health departments in Garvin and Murray counties, stresses anyone and everyone is invited to participate in this initial meeting and the establishment of an organized health coalition.

"Health touches everyone's life in some way or another," Selman said.

"This is an informal meeting to discuss health concerns in Pauls Valley. Whether you have a health background or not we invite you to come to this meeting. The more people we have the better it's going to be. We want to gather as many thoughts and ideas as possible," she said.

"We need as many community residents there to give their ideas. We want to gather as much information as we can this first time."

The meeting is scheduled for a 6 p.m. start on Thursday, Aug. 26 at the Pauls Valley Public Library.

According to Selman, those attending this first meeting will be asked to list their top three health concerns. Ideas could range from establishing youth camps to walking trails to just about anything for the betterment of residents' health.

Afterwards the information will be gathered into a data base as the group as a whole will decide how to proceed from there.

"We're trying to start a health coalition," Selman said.

"This will be a community led coalition; a grassroots approach to health."

The idea of establishing a coalition came about through the friendship of Selman and Racheal Winters, owner of Curves in Pauls Valley. Both ladies are in the business of improving people's health, so they decided the start of an organized effort was a good way to start.

"We came together and were working on different health issues in Pauls Valley," Selman said.

"We were looking at ways to get different people's input on health issues and how we could move forward as a coalition to tackle those issues."

Another example of the effort is the recent and highly successful Measure Up program done through the Main Street Pauls Valley program.

As evidence of the need for a coalition Selman said Garvin County as a whole ranks very low in the health of its residents.

This year the county only ranked 69th in good health out of the 77 counties in the state.

She adds Oklahoma as a state was ranked 47th in the country in 2008 but fell last year to 49th.

“We want to get this county out of its poor health ranking. We know it’s going to take time, but we want to try and get that ranking climbing up,” Selman said.

The ideas from residents is not only a big part of Thursday’s initial meeting but also the type of coalition it will wind up being. That means it may or may not be a non-profit organization. It will, however, have by-laws in place, she said.

“It depends on what people want from this initial meeting. We want to decide the goals and objectives and what we can do to move forward as a coalition.”

Hopes are the health coalition, once formed, will begin to meet on a monthly basis.