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Tom Fink, Staff Reporter

Town hall meeting addresses teen pregnancy issues

The Healthy Community Partnership will be hosting a town hall meeting to discuss the persistent issue of teen pregnancy in Rogers County and Oklahoma.

The town hall will allow attendees to hear information uncovered by HCP's recent focus groups and informant interviews about the negative impact of teenage pregnancy in Claremore and Rogers County.

The meeting will be at 6 p.m. on July 15 at the Claremore Community Center, 2301 N. Sioux.

"This (issue) is something we've wanted to address and create a strategy to combat for some time," said Trisha DeLozier, HCP. "Some of the information we plan to share with the public from our findings (at the town hall meeting) will surprise them and give them an idea of just how bad this problem is, not just on a state level, but locally—here in Rogers County."

According to 2010 statistics from the Oklahoma Health Department, on average in Oklahoma, births to teen mothers cost about \$3,800 annually for each teenage pregnancy.

With a 2010 average of 108.8 births, teen pregnancy costs the citizens of Rogers County \$348,160.00 per year.

Cherokee Nation Behavior Health Prevention staff members will be facilitating the findings at the town hall meeting.

"We ask everyone to consider attending the town hall meeting, and participating in the workgroup which will be created during the meeting to look at strategies and prevention tactics to address the problem," DeLozier said.

"Some people may think that teen pregnancy doesn't affect them, but really, it affects us all."

HCP is a community coalition that was created in early 2009 with representation from 12 sectors of the Claremore community making up its officers and membership.

"Claremore is the HCP's 'hub' community, but our efforts extend to the entire Rogers County area with a satellite coalition being formed in Chelsea," said Melynda Stone, incoming HCP president. "The emphasis of Healthy Community Partnership is to build long-term and community-wide strategic prevention plans that implement evidence-based programs and strategies impacting norms, policies, and practices and contributing to system change.

"As a result, HCP's efforts have achieved positive outcomes from substance abuse and related problems," she said. "We've focused on areas of law enforcement involvement, education in schools, youth organizations and citizens of Rogers County."

HCP also has purchased drug dogs for the Claremore Police Department and the Rogers County Sheriff's department, and has provided numerous educational programs and speakers in the Rogers County Schools.

HCP has partnered with RocoFit, the Blue Staff Community Garden, Turning Point and RC Task Force in an effort to strengthen its resources.

A light dinner will be served, and there will be chances to win door prizes.

For more information about the upcoming town hall meeting or to reserve a seat, contact HCP at (918) 260-0301.