

St. Bernards Receives Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Grant

St. Bernards Medical Center has received a \$52,641 grant from the Arkansas Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program to implement efforts to decrease and eliminate tobacco use in Craighead County.

To help successfully implement a smoking cessation plan, the Tobacco Free Coalition of Craighead County is being established. A youth leadership board also will be established in collaboration with other local prevention organizations such as Out of the Dark and Crowley's Ridge Development Council to provide a venue for working with schools.

Persons interested in serving on the new coalition will meet Oct. 7 at noon at the St. Bernards Imaging Center, 1144 East Matthews Avenue. Anyone interested in being a part of the organization and helping with planning should contact Project Coordinator Jessica Weems at 336-4912 or via email at jessicaweems@hotmail.com. Persons interested in attending the meeting and serving on the coalition are asked to contact Weems by Friday, Sept. 23.

Under the grant awarded to St. Bernards, partnerships will be established to implement a variety of activities that teach Arkansas youth about the dangers of tobacco. They will distribute information to tobacco users about services available to help them quit. And they will act as tobacco control advocates, raising awareness about the burden tobacco use places on the user, his or her family and, in fact, all Arkansans

The local project calls for healthcare professionals and others to work with schools, businesses and city government to develop smoke-free work places and other smoke-free environments.

Among plans for the local organization are providing educational information for the Hispanic population through resources such as the Hispanic Community Center of Jonesboro, creating a "Smoke-Free Workplace" tool kit to be distributed to area businesses, working towards creation of tobacco-free environments across Craighead County and working with the schools in the county to provide tobacco-free resources and assist with school events.

Some other activities will include distributing tobacco-free information at events such as the Northeast Arkansas District Fair and the HMG Health & Fitness Expo. Another activity will be sponsorship of a tobacco-free billboard contest for area school students, with the winning design to be displayed on a billboard in Jonesboro.

Community partnerships will be formed to help distribute information to tobacco users about services available to help them quit.

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