

Nonprofits offer free pain, stress management program

More people died from drug overdoses in 2016 than from battle injuries during the Vietnam War.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, three-fourths of those deaths were caused by opioids.

Deaths by opioid overdose continue rising nationwide with North Carolina among those states hard hit by the epidemic.

A 2016 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study found the counties with the highest rates of drug overdose deaths are in western or southeastern North Carolina.

Putting an end to such statistics locally is the goal of Home Remedies: Community Options for Addressing Pain and Stress, an ongoing, free weekly program beginning Monday, May 7, at Mission Health's Mauzy-Phillips Center in Spruce Pine.

The hour-long program

starts at 5:30 p.m. in the community room.

Several complementary care providers will be on hand for a panel discussion at the May 7 kickoff to showcase different approaches to pain and stress management. Both general medicine practitioners and the community at-large are welcome.

The panel includes Jade Pierce (acupuncture), Jennie Boyd Bull (tai chi/qi gong), Rachel Swinney (massage), Margot Rossi (Eastern medicine) and Dr. Miguel Cruz (chiropractic).

Each will discuss the potential health and wellness benefits of the work they do as well as address questions and concerns.

"We're looking at these options to keep people from using opioid prescriptions in the first place or at least minimize their use," said Basil Savitsky, prevention coordinator for Mitchell and

Yancey Counties for RHA Health Services. "I like to say this program isn't about putting out fires anymore; it's about changing the fire code."

That new fire code includes an introduction to mindfulness.

"There's rigorous research behind the practice of mindfulness in reducing pain and stress," said Margot Rossi program director who is both an area acupuncturist, Eastern medicine practitioner and certified mindfulness educator. "In addition to recent groundbreaking science, there's also research dating back 30 years."

Rossi encourages area residents interested in learning more about mindfulness to mark their calendars for the May 14 session.

"The hour-long program will be entirely devoted to mindfulness," she said. "I'll be discussing the benefits of mindfulness, how it affects

both the brain and body, and introduce some easy-to-do practices that participants can do at home."

Rossi said each weekly program will devote 15 minutes to mindfulness practices before the evening's topic is presented.

"It is a practice," she said. "The more you incorporate it into your daily life, the greater the results. My hope is that people will use what they learn in our classes to create a practice of their own. Even if it's only for a minute, I encourage people to practice mindfulness daily. I've seen the benefits in my own life. I grew up cultivating a reactive personality and experiencing anxiety. Mindfulness practices have helped me pause and reflect before responding in stressful situations. I feel much more positive and able to calm myself. The benefits keep on surprising me."

Future classes will include

a community acupuncture session and hands-on introductions to massage, Tai Chi, Qi Gong and the Feldenkrais Method.

"This is the beginning," Rossi said. "We've just received the funds and are still developing the program. The gist of what we're doing is giving people the tools they need to take charge of their wellbeing."

The Home Remedies program is being managed collaboratively by Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, RHA Health Services and Partners Aligned Towards Health, or PATH, and their program the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force.

Funding for the sessions is being provided by the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, through the Substance

Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Opioid STR/Cures Grant.

More information about upcoming programs will soon be available at www.path.org.

"What excites me most about this program is that we have skilled practitioners in our community offering services that are proven to be effective in preventing and treating chronic pain," said Shell McCall, PATH executive director. "So often, the quickest and simplest solution is looking to a pill for help in alleviating our pain. We now know all-too-well some of the tragic consequences of opioids, and the toll they are taking on our community. We want to offer hope that there are good alternatives for pain relief that are locally available. Best of all, the program is offered at no-cost for anyone who is interested in exploring these resources."

Mitchell County Child Data Card reveals troubling lack of progress on child poverty

The new Mitchell County Data Card shows child poverty and hunger remain major problems for children as 46.9 percent of Mitchell County children still live in poor or near-poor homes, a major risk factor for negative educational, health and economic outcomes in the future. Additionally, 26.7 percent of Mitchell County children live in food-insecure households, putting at risk their immediate health, safety and ability to learn.

NC Child, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that wrote the report cards, called on elected officials and candidates for office to champion children's issues in the coming election and to take specific actions to address the ongoing child poverty crisis in North Carolina.

"Big problems demand big solutions," said Michelle Hughes, executive director of NC Child. "Each year, our elected representatives have an extraordinary opportunity to use public policy to improve the lives of children and families. In 2018, we hope candidates will take bold steps to support families by making affordable, high-quality health insurance available in North Carolina, investing in our public schools, and expanding access to quality early learning programs for young children."

The data snapshot shows how children and families are faring in 15 key areas of well-being. Aside from family financial security, North Carolina and Mitchell County are making progress toward improving children's health and education, but a stronger investment in evidence-based

policy solutions is needed to assure children's current well-being and long-term success.

- 78.7 percent of women in Mitchell County received early prenatal care in 2016 vs. 80.1 percent in 2015. Statewide, 69 percent of women received early prenatal care.

- Relatedly, 7.8 percent of babies were born at a low-birthweight in 2016 vs 8.6 percent in 2015. Statewide, 9 percent of babies were born at a low-birthweight.

- In 2017, 87.6 percent of high school students graduated on time compared to 84.2 percent in 2016. Statewide, 86.5 percent graduated on time.

"Marginal progress is better than no progress, but the fact remains that our state's children face far too many barriers to success. Treading water isn't good enough," said Whitney Tucker, research director at NC Child. "North Carolina's children demand our best efforts to improve their circumstances now so they can thrive in the future."

The Mitchell County Data Card also includes sample questions constituents can ask candidates for office about their plans to accelerate North Carolina's progress on key issues facing children, such as early education, family financial security and access to health insurance for parents.

NC Child calls on constituents, candidates, and current elected officials to make children their top priority in 2018.

To compare Mitchell County child well-being indicators with other counties or statewide data, follow this link.



Pastured pork, beef available at Spruce Pine Farmer's Market

There's no denying vendors and customers alike have a great time at the Spruce Pine Farmer's Market.

From singing along with the week's featured musician, to running around in costumes, it's a great way to visit with friends and spend a Wednesday afternoon shopping locally.

This week the market will have pastured pork and beef along with free range eggs, produce, tomato plants, fresh mushrooms,

gluten-free breads and fruit sweetened baked goods.

Bring your dull kitchen knives and let Sharptop Sharpening Service put a fine edge on them, or get your mother's day shopping done.

Hand etched glassware, delightfully scented goat milk soaps or relaxing herbal teas make great Mother's Day presents.

The market runs from 2-5:30 p.m. on Locust Street downtown.

Collaborations workshop coming to Grandfather Mountain May 15

Grandfather Mountain and WNC Nonprofit Pathways are collaborating on a workshop for area nonprofits from 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday, May 15, in the Sunroom of the Nature Museum at Grandfather Mountain near Linville.

The cost to attend is \$25 for the first person and \$20 each for up to three more from the same organization. Lunch is included, and Grandfather Mountain is waiving the admission fee for registrants. This workshop is also made possible with the support of Duke Energy.

The topic is Collaboration: Best Practices, Benefits and Challenges, and will be led by Meghan Merritt, who is the Executive Director and CEO of the Corpening Memorial YMCA in Marion. Merritt believes in the strength of rural communities working together and has championed collabo-



Merritt

ration through her various roles with the McDowell County Health Coalition, the McDowell Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of Marion, WNC Non-Profit Pathways, and other community organizations. Through her collaborative spirit, she has developed enduring partnerships with school systems, area employers and health systems and is known for her diplomacy in helping organizations work past any "red tape," empowering them to be better together.

The first half of this session will answer three very valid questions: Why should we partner in the first place? Is it worth the potential benefits? How do we overcome typical challenges that get in the way? The second half of the session will allow for collaborative brainstorming on potential partnerships that could be formed to address issues specific to Avery, Burke, Caldwell, McDowell, Mitchell and Yancey counties.

If groups have ever thought about the need to build a partnership or coalition to improve their communities, this is a golden opportunity, especially if potential partners attend together.

Registration in advance is required. Send an email by May 12 to Susan Larson at sjanelarson@gmail.com for a link to register. Call 828-765-2652 for more information.

SPRING TEA



Girls sit in anticipation for tea, cakes and crafts at the Spring Tea event at Grassy Creek Presbyterian Church this past Saturday. The event, which was hosted by Delta Kappa Gamma Society for Women Educators, raised money for a scholarship fund for future educators.

CORY SPIERS/Mitchell News-Journal