

Local

Regional officials to host community health forum

✎ By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer

🕒 07.31.19

The Green River Area Development District, Green River District Health Department and Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky will partner to host a regional community health forum next month.

At the forum, Ben Chandler, president and CEO of the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, and some of his staff members will provide an update on the Kentucky HEALTH Medicaid waiver program, resources available to beneficiaries and what lies ahead for that program. They also will discuss the foundation's current research, including the next Kentucky Health Issues Poll.

Chandler will make brief presentations about foundation resources available to communities. He also will talk about teen vaping.

Representatives from the region's seven health coalitions will provide updates on current programs and share information about future projects.

The forum is free to the public.

"We should all be interested in improving the health of this region," said Blaine Pieper, Ohio County Healthcare CEO and chair of the Green River Regional Health Council.

It is the first time the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky has collaborated with regional officials on a forum of this type, Pieper said.

The upcoming meeting will take place from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Aug. 14 at the GRADD office, 300 Gradd Way.

Space is limited to between 75 and 100 people. Online registration is required at <https://bit.ly/2GrTazw>.

By Tuesday morning, 20 registrations had been received.

Organizers said the meeting should be of particular interest to health care providers, public health professionals, elected officials, and business and education leaders, to name a few.

"Historically, Kentucky has not been the healthiest place to live," Pieper said.

According to the American Lung Association, Kentucky ranks first in the nation for the number of new lung cancer cases diagnosed each year.

The effects of smoking cost Kentuckians dearly. Each household -- whether its members smoke or not -- pays close to \$1,200 a year for the state's smoking habit, Chandler reported in the past.

In addition to a high rate of lung cancer, a recent national report shows the state ranks seventh for diabetes.

Instead of treating symptoms and diseases, it's time to promote living healthier lifestyles, Pieper said.

"We've got to do things to prevent these health issues from happening," he said. "People live more meaningfully when they are healthy. If they aren't, it's a struggle."

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