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Whirlwind Career Counseling Director Ed Poley, right, talks with visitors at last year's Fall Into Health Fair. This year, Poley will be making veterans a larger part of the fair with the Community and Veteran Health, Job and Education Fair Saturday at the Seward County Fairgrounds. See Thursday's Leader for a story regarding Whirlwind's role in the fair. Daily Leader file photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader This Saturday, people from throughout the area will make their way to the Seward County Fairgrounds. After a successful first year, the Community Health Fair is back, and coordinators Nancy Kletecka of Southwest Medical Center and Elizabeth Irby are very excited for this year's event.

Irby noted one change in this year's fair, as it has changed from being just a health fair.

"It's a Community and Veteran Health, Job and Education Fair," she said.

Irby said she looks at the areas of health, jobs and education as going hand in hand.

"If you have poor health, your job is going to be in jeopardy," she said. "You are out ill. If you don't have a job and you don't have health care coverage, your health can be poor because of that. You're not seeking health care if you have illness, and if you're not educated, it's hard to find a job, so in turn, you can't get health care."

The fair will take place from 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday at the Seward County Activity Center, and Irby said the number of sponsors for this year has improved.

“We’re very happy with that,” she said.

Irby said she and Kletecka work with many other agencies.

“It’s not just the hospital and the health department,” she said.

Visitors to the fair will have flu vaccine available at a cost of \$25.

“As they come in the front doors, which is the southeast doors of the Activity Center, they’ll have numerous lines to choose from,” Irby said. “There’s a line there for flu. You’ll go to that line, and you’ll receive your form that you’ll fill out and pay your \$25 – either cash, check, charge. You take that form, go sit down, get it filled out.”

Irby said the health department’s area will be located along the west wall of the Activity Center.

“You’ll come over there and give your form that’s completed,” she said. “You can go through and get your flu vaccine.”

Kletecka said some things are being done to make the event better for people, as well as to get more room in the Activity Center.

“Last year, we had people lined up an hour ahead of time,” she said. “We just don’t want them standing out in the cold. We’re trying to fix it to where we can make the lines a little bit more user friendly.”

Visitors can also sign up with Liberal Parks and Rec for a 5K and a 1-mile walk and run.

“You need to be there at 7:30 in the morning,” Kletecka said. “The 5K begins at 8. The 1-mile walk and run begins at 9.”

As people go through the fair, Kletecka said they will be directed by staff members and greeters, who can answer questions.

“There’s an area set aside for you to wait in and have your paperwork checked and make sure you’ve got everything filled out appropriately,” she said. “We’ll have an envelope in their packet that they will need to make sure they put their name and address of where they want their test results sent to. These envelopes will be stamped.”

That postage will be taken care of through a donation made from Whirlwind Career Counselors for Veterans and Emergency Responders.

Kletecka said last year’s event went smoothly, and it should be even better this year with a new bone scan machine for visitors.

“Several of our new physicians will be there to talk to people,” she said. “Dr. Boller will actually

be helping with the breast exams in the radiology department's booth for part of the day."

There will be a concession stand, which Kletecka said will have health related items.

"People really need to remember they need to fast after midnight – no eating or drinking – to be able to get this blood work done," she said.

Irby said this means not eating or drinking anything, but she said those who take medication in the morning can continue to do so.

"Brushing your teeth, because toothpaste has sugar in it, is something that can affect your lab work," she said. "If they just rinse their mouth with water, that would be sufficient enough."

Irby said there are 78 vendors for this year's fair, and visitors can also play the health fair bingo.

"It gets people to go to each and every booth," Kletecka said. "If they want to be eligible for door prizes, they have to take that bingo card to each and every vendor that is marked on the bingo card and get it stamped."

Cards can be returned to the front desk with names and contact information, and Kletecka said the completed cards will be put in a drawing for door prizes.

"The vendors were really happy with it last year," she said. "They said they got to talk to more people that way than they have at a lot of events that they've attended."

Kletecka said the fair is not a hospital event or a health department event, but rather a community event.

"That is the mindset that we've all tried to keep going," she said. "We're doing this for the community, especially now when the economy's so bad."

Irby said if people have anything that is discovered during their visit to the health fair, it is encouraged for them to discuss it with their physician.

Kletecka said fair vendors will not provide test results to doctors.

"They have to take that," she said. "We'll send it to them, and it's up to them to take it to the physician of their choice."

Kletecka and Irby were approached by Ed Poley of Whirlwind to become part of the fair, and the two welcomed him with open arms.

"I think it's wonderful what he is doing and how he has joined in with us," Kletecka said. "He is having a free luncheon for veterans at 12 o'clock Saturday, and it's actually taking place at the Ag Building. People in our community can call here to the health department to RSVP. That luncheon is being catered by Billy's Bar-B-Q. They have a wonderful speaker that's coming out

from the VA in Wichita.”

Kletecka said rides will also be available to the fair.

“If people cannot make it out even to the Activity Center, they need to call the Liberal Good Samaritan Center and make a reservation through them,” she said. “They will actually pick them up at their homes and take them out to the fair and take them back to their homes when they’re done.”

Golf carts and wheel chairs will also be available at the Activity Center for those who have a hard time getting around the facility.

Kletecka said seating for the veterans luncheon is limited to 200, so reservations need to be made. Irby said guest speakers will give presentations throughout the day at the fair, including Dr. Mariana Lucero and Irby herself.

Head Start will provide day care, and Irby said it is not available for the general public.

“It’s for attendees of the fair if they have small children with them,” she said. “Head Start is going to do some directed activities. The children can do some activities that are health related and learning. It’s not just a free time to come in and play.”

The Lions Bus will be back this year as well.

“We were really blessed last year because we were the very first ones that got to use that brand new bus from the Lions Club,” Kletecka said.

Student nurses from Seward County Community College/Area Technical School will also be helping out with hearing tests, vision screenings, flu vaccines and blood draws.

“It’s truly a community health fair when you get lots of different agencies working together and all benefiting people from our community,” Irby said.

Vendors are making their way from as far away as towns such as Hays, Wichita and Amarillo, Texas. Kletecka said one booth at the fair will be doing diabetic foot exams, as well as one focused on teenagers and drinking.

Kletecka and Irby were both especially excited about a last-minute donation, which allowed them to drop the price of a blood test and other exams from \$40 to \$25.

“Female testing is \$800,” Irby said. “A male’s is \$700, and they’re getting it for \$25. We’re so blessed that this donation has come through. We’re very pleased with our sponsorships this year. We’ve really improved on that, and we welcome more sponsors.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Watch the Daily Leader for details of how the veterans and job fair has been added to the fair and how that benefits additional citizens of the community.

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