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Workshop set July 14 to address childhood obesity

In an unprecedented effort to address childhood obesity, Active Living for Life (ALFL) and the Sarasota County Wellness Coalition, along with Sarasota County schools, are seeking community input in designing a plan to help students and their families to achieve a healthy weight. As a call to action, the public is invited to attend a workshop to develop a school-based Body Mass Index (BMI) intervention plan for students and families of students who fall outside healthy BMI ranges.

The workshop will be held from 8:30-11:30 a.m. Wednesday, July 14, at The Landings School District Administration Center, 1960 Landings Boulevard, Blue Awning Building, Room 220.

BMI is a measurement used to assess healthy weight status based on an individual's height and weight, and may be used to estimate a person's risk level for chronic disease. Florida schools are mandated to measure the BMIs of students in certain grades.

"With the mandate goes the imperative to act on the data collected in order to provide assistance and support to students and families of students falling outside healthy BMI ranges," says Linda Glover, school health supervisor and chair of the Sarasota County Wellness Coalition. "Together, we are working to improve the health of the entire community. We need your help to shape the BMI intervention plan."

The focus of the workshop is to develop:

- an educational campaign and toolkit of resources to help parents understand BMI and its impact on quality of life and the things they can do.
- effective ways to contact and interact with parents, and to recruit parent volunteers at individual schools to work on this issue.

ALFL is the local extension of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Healthy Communities Initiative, which focuses on creating healthy communities through policy, environmental and systems change strategies. ALFL is comprised of an executive team of local leadership and several small, project-focused work groups. Anyone interested in joining or learning more about ALFL is asked to contact Jennifer Tucker, Healthy Communities coordinator for the South County Family YMCA, at jtucker@veniceymca.org.

The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition works through partnerships to create a healthier community. The coalition sponsors free and low-cost education sessions on a range of obesity prevention topics. Member organizations of the coalition include the Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, Sarasota County Extension Family Nutrition Program, Venice Regional Medical Center, Sarasota County Schools, Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center and South County Family YMCA.

Anyone who plans to attend this workshop is asked to preregister by calling Linda Glover, chair of the Sarasota County Wellness Coalition, at 941-927-9000, extension 32101, or e-mail Linda_Glover@doh.state.fl.us. Those who wish to provide input into the BMI Intervention Plan, but cannot attend the meeting, are asked to contact Linda with their suggestions. Visit The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition's website at www.sarasotawellness.org.

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