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Community partners launch Healthy Minds initiative, to offer free educational events, screenings for healthier minds in Lee, Collier counties

September 25, 2020 – The mental and emotional effects of COVID-19 are impacting well-being in significant ways amid the pandemic, with 40% of U.S. adults reporting symptoms of anxiety or depression, in addition to increases in substance

use and thoughts of suicide. To address this urgent and increased need for support on a local level, 17 behavioral health organizations across Lee and Collier counties have partnered to launch a new community initiative, called Healthy Minds.

Beginning this week, Healthy Minds will offer educational events and complimentary screenings across Lee and Collier counties, providing accessible, convenient tips and resources at no cost for adults who are experiencing new or increased feelings of anxiety, depression, stress, substance use and more. From financial strain due to changes in employment to the demand of juggling jobs while homeschooling young children, many are feeling more isolated and less in control of their lives. For those who are overwhelmed or struggling, seeking help now can address concerns before they become crises. Healthy Minds events will be held at select dates and locations over the next several months, offering valuable resources, tools, techniques and screenings geared to help others gain resilience and overcome adversity.

“The need for mental health support is greater than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our families, livelihoods and communities, yet data has shown that nearly half of Florida adults with an unmet need for mental health treatment are deterred from seeking care because of cost,” said Dr. Paul Simeone, vice president and medical director of behavioral health at Lee Health. “The Healthy Minds initiative was created to help address this urgent need for support, providing access to mental health providers in an affordable and friendly setting to connect people to the resources they need and the care they deserve.”

No advance registration is necessary. Those interested in resources or a free screening can simply show up to the venue at the designated date and time and speak to an expert who will then help link individuals with local service providers and share information about the community resources available. A Healthy Minds Resilience Toolkit, which offers additional tips for navigating life’s twists and turns, will be handed

out to all guests at the events. The toolkits – available in English, Spanish and Creole – are also available for download at HealthyLee.com/HealthyMinds.

Dedicated to offering community resources for resilience, support and well-being, the Healthy Minds initiative is pioneered by several community organizations including members of the Healthy Lee Behavioral Health Coalition, which includes David Lawrence Center, Elite DNA Therapy Services, Florida Gulf Coast University, Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, Healthcare Network, Healthy Lee, Lee County Coalition for a Drug-Free Southwest Florida, Lee Health, Park Royal, SalusCare, United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee Counties, and Valerie's House. Additional community partners include Better Together, Kimmie's Recovery Zone, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), NCH Healthcare System and The School District of Lee County.

Lee County events will be held beginning this Saturday, Sept. 26 at the Florida Repertory Theatre. Additional events will be available at the Florida Repertory Theatre, Southwest Florida Military Museum & Library and in Bonita Springs and Lehigh Acres. In Collier, events this week will take place Sept. 25 at Guadalupe Center, Sept. 26 at Healthcare Network's Nichols Community Health Center and Sept. 30 at Veterans Community Park. Additional events will be held at Catholic Charities Judy Sullivan Family Resource Center, East Naples Community Park, Golden Gate Community Center, Guadalupe Center, Healthcare Network's Nichols Community Health Center, Immokalee Community Park, Max Hasse Community Park, Veterans Community Park and YMCA of South Collier.

For a full list of upcoming events and resources, or to sign up for volunteer opportunities, visit HealthyLee.com/HealthyMinds.

About Healthy Lee

Comprised of more than 300 Lee County businesses and organizations, the Healthy Lee initiative reflects Lee County's comprehensive sustainability strategy through promoting the integration of healthy lifestyle choices into

the daily routines of the community of Lee County. The movement promotes collaborative partnerships and seeks to provide the resources, tools and knowledge to empower the community to make exercise, nutrition and well-being a priority. For more information, visit www.HealthyLee.com.

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