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Event targets all forms of health

High Street Baptist Church, Piedmont Health host wellness event

MILTON (April 20, 2013) – The High Street Baptist Church on Saturday morning was transformed into a classroom, doctor’s office, gym and snack bar. By noon, it was back to being a small, unassuming church set on a gentle hill in the countryside, but by then approximately two dozen people were a little wiser about their physical, emotional and spiritual health.

The church hosted “A Morning of Wellness for Wholeness,” an event featuring eating tips, cooking advice and medical screenings from health experts. To make sure the tips hit home, the experts provided healthy snacks and refreshments and demonstrated some simple exercises designed to show how easy it was to exercise daily.

It was all part of an effort by the church, located at 11759 Academy Street, to promote healthier lifestyles. The event was cosponsored by Piedmont Health, a Carrboro, N.C.-based nonprofit that operates six community health centers as well as a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

Rev. Angel Lea, High Street Baptist Church’s pastor, hoped the program would have benefits for members beyond the physical.

“There are a lot of health issues going on in the church,” Rev. Lea said, explaining why she agreed to host the event. “When I’m delivering the message, sometimes I can see that people are stressed. ...I hope [the event] is going to help the church as a whole to be more healthy and to know what is right and to use that as a way to be more healthy spiritually.”

She even saw a direct connection between physical health and the church’s spiritual mission: “When we’re healthy, we can be more active and we’re able to go out and witness.”

Rev. Lea was approached about hosting the event by Cathia Stewart, a church member who is also a patient at Piedmont Health’s Prospect Hill Community Health Center. The event is similar to many that Piedmont arranges throughout central North Carolina as part of its mission to improve the health and well being of the community by providing high quality, affordable, and comprehensive primary health care.

There is, indeed, a connection between the many forms of health, Monica Schmucker, a family nurse practitioner for Piedmont Health, told participants. Schmucker discussed relational, physical, spiritual and mental/emotional health. Among the tips she gave were:

- Don't smoke. She said 50 percent of people who smoke die of smoking-related illnesses, urging participants who are hooked on tobacco to call 1-800-QUITNOW.
- Eat more natural foods. "Eat what God made," she said. "If you're looking at an ingredients label and you don't know what something is and can't even pronounce it, that's probably an indication that you shouldn't be eating a lot of it."
- Celebrate occasionally but keep it in check. "Don't feel guilty about eating cake and ice cream at a birthday party but don't eat it every day," Schmucker said.
- Cope with stress in healthy ways. The best way is exercise, she said, advising participants to commit to exercising 30 minutes a day, five days a week.
- Recognize the impact of anger and unresolved hurt may be having on your health.
- Find ways to love, forgive, and find meaning, purpose and hope.

Frida Hernandez-Ble, a registered dietician and nutritionist with Piedmont Health, told participants that some factors that increase their risk of incurring diabetes – such as ethnicity and age – cannot be controlled, but that other factors can be controlled. Weight is a major factor, she said, telling participants not to be discouraged if they cannot lose weight easily. "Even losing small amounts of weight can make a big difference," she said.

Hernandez-Ble encouraged participants to make sure that at least half of their plate at each meal consists of fruit or vegetables – "the more colorful, the better," she said.

Participants said they got a lot out of the event. Sophia Robinson, a nursing assistant from Danville, Va., said she got tips for exercises she could do despite having arthritis. Mary Jennings, a nursing assistant from Milton, said she learned that "just a little bit of exercise helps."

Milton resident Katie Stone, a nurse, said even she picked up some tips. "This is a refresher course for me," she said, adding, "There was a great need for this health fair."

For more information about Piedmont Health, call 919-933-8494 or visit www.piedmonthealth.org.