

Dogwood Health Trust now operational with close of \$1.5 billion Mission Health asset sale to HCA

With the recent announcement of the completion of Mission Health System's sale of assets to HCA Healthcare, Dogwood Health Trust is now officially operating as a private, nonprofit foundation whose purpose is to dramatically improve the health and well-being of all people and communities in Western North Carolina.

"This is an historic day for Western North Carolina as we realize the creation of what we believe is the nation's largest per capita foundation focused on addressing the underlying factors that impact the health of our community," said Dogwood Health Trust Board of Directors Chair Janice Brumit. "With substantial resources and a strategic focus on addressing causes and not just symptoms, Dogwood Health Trust stands to affect community wellness

on a scale that hasn't been possible."

HCA Healthcare paid approximately \$1.5 billion for the assets of Mission Health, which previously operated as a private not-for-profit health system that was the sixth-largest in North Carolina. Proceeds from the purchase will be combined with Mission Health's remaining cash and investments - after all debts and obligations are paid - and transferred to Dogwood Trust.

Dogwood Trust will seek to fulfill its purpose by addressing what the World Health Organization and other experts call the social determinants of health - factors such as individuals' early childhood development, education, economic stability and physical surroundings. With HCA positioned to deliver world-class healthcare services

to the region, Dogwood Trust will invest its resources toward continuing and expanding upon Mission Health's 133-year commitment to the people of Western North Carolina.

Among Dogwood Trust's first investments is an agreement to provide \$25 million over five years to fund programs and services addressing substance use disorder for residents of Western North Carolina. As one of Dogwood's commitments to the North Carolina Attorney General's office in connection with its review of the Mission Health-HCA purchase, the Trust will support programs developed by the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

"Since the creation of Dogwood Health Trust last July, our board has been working to lay the foundation for an organiza-

tion that will partner with and support organizations who are doing vital work in our community," Brumit said. "We look forward to working with regional nonprofit organizations, state and local government leaders, other funders and experts in the field to meaningfully impact the known drivers of health and well-being throughout our 18-county region."

The current 11-member Dogwood Trust Board continues to focus on establishing its organizational and operational structure, including identifying additional members to ensure a diversity of expertise and perspectives that reflects all of Western North Carolina. The Board, which serves voluntarily without compensation, is also conducting a national search for Dogwood's first chief executive officer and planning to

hold public meetings in each of Western North Carolina's three regions to gather input from fellow residents about community needs and funding priorities.

"We take very seriously our responsibility to be good stewards of resources entrusted to us through the change in ownership of one of our community's most treasured institutions," added Brumit. "And we are committed to keeping people and communities at the forefront of everything we do, to being transparent and accountable for producing the

greatest possible impact, and to applying strategic and innovative approaches to achieve transformative change."

Dogwood Health Trust is a North Carolina not-for-profit corporation with the sole purpose of dramatically improving the health and well-being of all people and communities across WNC. Dogwood Health Trust became operational upon Mission Health's acquisition by HCA Healthcare and is the recipient of the net proceeds of the sale. To learn more, visit dogwoodhealthtrust.org.

Sheriff Banks issues appeal to citizens in fight against crime

Responding to the increasing number of people wanting to assist law enforcement officials and build a stronger partnership in the fight against crime, Sheriff Banks announced that Yancey County citizens are being invited to become Honorary Members of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association.

Membership applications go out in the mail on Feb. 14. Individuals choosing to join the voluntary program can do so for \$25, while businesses can show their support with a \$50 contribution.

A letter from each Sheriff is mailed to citizens and businesses in his or her county inviting them to become Honorary Members of the North Carolina

Sheriffs' Association.

Each person receives a personalized letter from the Sheriff inviting him or her to join. No one is ever contacted by telephone.

The funding provides critically important technical resources, legislative support on key criminal justice issues, support for the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association Undergraduate Criminal Justice Scholarship Program at state universities, and additional training for Sheriffs and their deputies.

Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by Section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

With funding becoming in-

creasingly difficult to secure, the North Carolina Sheriffs Association's Honorary Membership Program has taken on greater importance than ever before, said Sheriff Banks. "The funding is vital in helping us carry out our mission of making our county a safer place to live, work and play."

Individuals not receiving a membership application or desiring more information may go to the North Carolina Sheriffs Association website at ncsheriffs.org or contact the North Carolina Sheriffs Association at: Post Office Box 20049, Raleigh, NC 27619-0049 or call (919) SHERIFF (743-7433).

Meanwhile, residents wishing to become Honorary Mem-

bers can also sign up for the program by contacting the Yancey County Sheriff's Office.

The Honorary Membership Program was created to provide citizens with an opportunity to lend their support to more effective law enforcement and to better help local Sheriffs protect the lives and property of citizens.

"As the need for building stronger public-private law enforcement partnerships in this county continues to escalate, programs such as this continue to grow in importance," said Sheriff Banks.

"I encourage everyone receiving a membership application to consider joining forces with us by becoming an Honorary Member. It is a valuable investment in our future."

Founded in 1922, the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association is a not-for-profit professional and educational organization dedicated to the preservation of peace and the protection of the lives and property of the citizens of North Carolina.

The Association office is located in Raleigh.

Winter heating season a good time to test your home for deadly radon

As families button up their homes to guard against winter's chill it is an ideal time to make plans to test for radon, the odorless, colorless gas that is our nation's second leading cause of lung cancer. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon causes more than 21,000 deaths each year, making it the second most common cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States and the number one cause among non-smokers.

Because testing is the only way to know if your family is at risk from radon, Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed January as Radon Action Month in North Carolina, and beginning next week, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human services is making 3,600 residential radon testing kits available at no charge. The test kits will be available from local health departments and county

extension offices in 32 counties with outreach efforts. Funds for the test kits were provided last fall through a grant from the EPA.

"Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas found in soil and rock that can seep through cracks in the foundations, walls and joints of homes," said NC Radiation Protection Section Chief Lee Cox. "About 7 percent of North Carolina homes have unsafe levels of radon, based on data we've collected. That is why we urge testing of homes."

Radon gas can accumulate and reach harmful levels when trapped in homes and buildings, as may occur during the home heating season, when warm air rises in homes, pulling air from the lower parts of the home where radon may enter. Elevated levels of indoor radon are a preventable and fixable problem with costs of mitiga-

tion to reduce the radon to safe levels ranging from \$800 to approximately \$2,500.

The NC Radon Program's website offers links to certified professionals who can assist in testing or fixing radon issues in homes. Through mitigation, the naturally occurring radioactive gas is released harmlessly from under the home into outdoor air.

For those who are not in the counties where free test kits are available, homes still should be tested. The NC Radon Program web page has links to several retailers that sell kits, and they are also available in many hardware stores.

Retail prices average below \$20 per kit. The website also lists resources and a link to an instructive video, and provides information on its web page for families who may qualify for financial assistance to meet mitigation expenses.

NC GAL National Day of Service Annual Peanut Butter & Jelly Campaign

The North Carolina GAL program has worked with community members to collect plastic jars of peanut butter and jelly and donate them to area Food Banks or Pantries in North Carolina. We are joining others in our nation in a community service project that honors service to others.

Our campaign began in October and ran through January 2019, the National Day of Service Week. This was our 3rd annual state-wide service project undertaken by the staff, volun-



teers, friends, and supporters of our program. For 35 years, we have represented the best interest of children in court. Much of the work we do is confidential in nature and therefore, our work is largely unknown outside of juvenile court. This project is a way for us to engage our communities in provisioning their local Food Banks or Pantries while at the same time highlighting who we are and what we do in a more public manner.

The program would like to thank the following community partners for helping to make this event a huge success: Glen Raven, Yancey Health Department, Yancey County Department of Social Services, US Cellular Premier Locations of Burnsville, Rotary Club of Mitchell County, Southern Ridge Café of Bakersville and Blue Ridge Partnership for Children.

A total of 146 Jars of peanut butter and 111 jars of jelly were collected. Donations were made to Feed a Child Yancey as well as school backpack programs in Madison and Mitchell Counties and food pantries in Avery and Watauga Counties.

If you are interested in learning more about the work the guardian ad litem program does to advocate for abused and neglected children in your community, please visit volunteerforgal.org or call Erica Griffith Edwards at 828-682-4754. Training for new volunteers will begin March 5.

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Connect @ Your Library

Ongoing events:

Wednesday Readers Book Club: The club meets the third Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at the library. The book for February is *Unsheltered* by Barbara Kingsolver.

Ales & Tales Book Club: The next meeting will be on the 1st Sunday of March at 2 p.m. at Homeplace Brewery. The book selection is *Becoming* by Michelle Obama.

Story Time: Thursdays at 11 a.m. with stories and movement activities for the kids. The next session will be on Feb. 14. The theme is Hugs and Kisses.

Baby Bookworms story time is at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14, for little ones ages birth to 2 years. (There will be no Baby Bookworms or Got Wiggles story time on February 28.)

LEGO Block Party: Thursdays @ 3pm and Saturdays @ 10am. We supply the LEGOs. Kids (7-12) just need to bring their best Lego ideas.

Events in February:

On Thursday, Feb. 28, from 5:30-7:30 the library is hosting an Intro to Zine Making Workshop led by Molly from the Upcycle WNC. Bring your own printed artwork or writing to contribute to a compilation zine with the theme *On the Move*. Other materials will be provided. RSVP to the library to reserve a space.

Contact us: On Facebook, by phone at 682-2600, email ycpl@amyregionallibrary.org, or leave a comment on Instagram (yanceycountylibrary). Share your thoughts, we love hearing from you!