

Brunswick Coalition moves two billboards

By Staff Report

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BOLIVIA — The Brunswick Coalition decided on two new locations for its billboards geared toward prescription drug abuse prevention.

The billboards are at 2618 Ocean Highway, a tenth of a mile south of Royal Oak Road in Shallotte, and 7270 U.S. 17 just south of N.C. 87 in Leland. The billboards will move to 5433 Main St. just south of Sellers Street in Shallotte, and at 101 N.C. 87 E. 600 feet east of U.S. 17 in Winnabow.

Coalition coordinator Tammy Brunelle, of Coastal Horizons in Wilmington, told those at the group's May meeting three potential locations to move the billboards were chosen because they are all near schools. She said these are the perfect areas because of people are more likely to slow down in a school zone and have more time to read billboards, and the target audience of the billboards is made up of parents.

Coastal Horizons prevention director Deeanna Hale-Holland said an application for continued funding through a Partnership For Success grant was due May 20. If approved, the funding will last an additional year, she said. PFS grants are only awarded to communities with high drug overdose rates.

Last month, Brunelle said Project Lazarus, a secular public health nonprofit established in 2008 in response to extremely high drug overdose death rates in Wilkes County, will not be able to provide a grant to the Brunswick Coalition this year.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Lt. Steve Lanier talked to coalition members about the potential of LEAD, or Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, possibly being implemented in the Brunswick-New Hanover County area. LEAD has different agencies involved in programs across the United States, including in Seattle.

Lanier said LEAD's basic mindset and concept is to target drug users before they are taken to jail and processed. An officer will approach someone who has been caught with drugs and has multiple offenses, and in lieu of the normal justice system cycle, the person is referred to a trauma-informed intensive case-management program, where he or she receives a wide range of services, according to LEADbureau.org. Services often include transitional and permanent housing and/or drug treatment.

Lanier said North Carolina's pilot program is in Fayetteville. Many law enforcement officers, including some from Brunswick and New Hanover counties, will travel to Seattle to learn more about the successful LEAD program there and see how it can be implemented in North Carolina.

"If we can get one person to stop so their life is prolonged, that's worth anything we can put in place," Lanier said.

Jeremy Seamon, of Coastal Horizons in Shallotte, said Robert Childs, executive director of the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition (NCHRC), will be in the Shallotte office Wednesday, June 1, and available from 1 to 2 p.m. to answer any questions from anyone who comes in about naloxone, or Narcan, and distribute naloxone kits. Naloxone helps to block the effects of opioids and can help reverse opioid overdoses.

The next Brunswick Coalition meeting will be Monday, June 20, at 3 p.m. at the Brunswick County Health Department.

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