



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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PRESS RELEASE

FREE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AWARENESS AND WELLNESS SEMINARS AIMED AT OLDER ADULTS KICKS OFF NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK!

(Toms River) - Every April the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) - along with the nation's public health community - engage people to join the crusade to make the United States the healthiest nation by 2030.

This year, the OCHD is unveiling two new and free programs aimed at our older adult community. *The Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE)* is a six-week, evidence based substance abuse program that will cover a range of topics from stress management and strategies for healthy living to medication management and prescription drug abuse.

Meanwhile, *Shore to Age Well: Medication Management and Alternatives* is an innovative, one-time event for older adults focusing on actual alternatives to pain management. *Shore to Age Well* will feature an interactive approach to help older adults celebrate aging, make positive lifestyle choices and feel more confident and in control of their life.

Ocean County Freeholder Gerry P. Little, liaison to the Ocean County Health Department explains, "The Ocean County Health Department is extremely excited about these two new initiatives that will benefit our community. When the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services awarded us the grant we couldn't wait to get the program off the ground and now it's ready to launch."

Just how important is this information to our older adults? According to the New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System, on average since 2006, 13% of Ocean County residents aged 45-54 and 4% of residents 55 and older have been admitted to treatment for substance abuse disorder.

One in four older adults claimed they filled an opioid prescription in the last two years according to the AARP's Healthy Aging survey. Fewer than half responding to the survey say they never discussed the risks of painkiller addiction with their doctors, and even fewer received counseling from their pharmacists.

"The timing is perfect," says Daniel E. Regenye, Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Public Health Coordinator. "Both the *WISE Initiative* and *Shore to Age Well* seminars meet the need of our residents. Many programs and classes like this just focus on how to dispose medications in the home and importance of speaking to your doctor. These classes will empower older adults with data on the opioid issues in Ocean County, as well as empowers them with actual alternatives to pain managements to explore with their doctor."

For more information regarding the free *WISE* and/or *Shore to Age Well* seminars, please contact Amanda Gan at 732-341-9700 ext. 7233, or visit the Ocean County Health Department website at www.ochd.org. Also, please check out our new website at www.phu2.org, to access and learn more about our Public Health is You Too! campaign to help equip you to take simple steps to improve your health.

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