

Health center to hold info session on importance of breast exams

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MIDDLETOWN — Community Health Center Inc. officials want to educate women in public housing about the importance of health and examinations.

Free informational sessions about breast health for women living in public or subsidized

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housing under the Middletown Housing Authority will take place Wednesday from 9 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4 p.m., and 5 to 7 p.m. The sessions will occur in the Sbona Towers Senior Center at 150 William St.

"This is a partnership between (CHC), the Middletown Housing Authority and the University of Connecticut Health Center," said grants and development director Larisa A. Pazmino, of The Community Health Center Inc.

This is the first time CHC has done a partnership outreach program regarding the matter of breast health, said Middlesex County Program Manager Carrie Musil of the Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. The collaborative effort is to raise awareness about women's health, and steps women can take to improve their breast health, officials said.

Information will be available regarding access to free mammograms, and CHC representatives will also ask the participating women to fill out short questionnaires to help them better understand why women don't get mammograms, and how they can make it easier for those women.

"It's an opportunity to approach those women in the public housing to find out where the barriers are," Pazmino said.

"The question is to figure out why they are not (going for examinations). It's a way to capture the population."

Even though there are gov-

ernment-sponsored free mammograms, too many women over 40, particularly African-American women, do not get an annual mammogram every year, CHC officials said. Breast cancer can be cured if it is caught early, and the mammogram is one of the best tools to find breast cancer when it is still in a curable stage, according to officials.

"There's plenty of opportunities," said Musil, who runs the state- and federally-funded early detection program out of the Main Street health center. Pap smears, and cervical and breast examinations are conducted through CHC. "There are resources out there available, and we want to help spread the word."

"It's an exciting project," said Pazmino.

The effort came about from Dr. Kristen Zarfos, who sees a lot of breast cancer patients and advocates early detection, she said.

There will be information and materials available specifically about mammograms and breast examinations, Musil said. There will also be some fun giveaways and light refreshments.

CHC is a provider of medical, dental and mental health care services in Middletown and neighboring towns since 1972. CHC is open to all, and accepts all public and private insurance programs.

For more information about the information sessions, call 347-6971 ext. 3513.

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