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Bullitt County Is Selected as a HeartSafe Community

FRANKFORT, KY (July 25, 2013) – The Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) announced today that Bullitt County is the next Kentucky county to earn the designation HeartSafe Community, an honor set aside for communities that have met criteria to better respond to cardiac arrests. Bullitt County joins Ashland-Boyd, Warren, McCracken, Shelby and Jefferson Counties on the growing list of counties working to be healthier and safer places to live.

“Heart disease affects the lives of many Kentuckians so it is imperative that we work together to make our state HeartSafe,” said DPH Commissioner Stephanie Mayfield, M.D. “We must be prepared to respond to cardiac arrest. I commend the citizens of Bullitt County for recognizing the seriousness of this public health issue and taking the necessary steps to become a HeartSafe Community.”

The HeartSafe Community program was launched in summer 2011 by the Kentucky Department for Public Health Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program as a way to help communities improve the chances that anyone suffering a sudden cardiac arrest will have the best possible chance for survival. Public Health is collaborating with the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services (KBEMS) and American Heart Association on the project.

HeartSafe communities meet a combination of factors viewed as preferable in a community’s ability to recognize and respond to cardiac arrest. These factors include:

- Early access to emergency care in which bystanders recognize the symptoms of cardiac arrest and immediately call 911.
 - Early CPR, a simple, easily learned emergency procedure used when someone's breathing and heartbeat suddenly stop.
 - Early defibrillation, the delivery of electric shock to restore the heart's normal rhythm.
 - Early advanced care delivered by a response vehicle staffed by advanced life support personnel.
 - “Protecting the health and welfare of Bullitt County residents is the highest priority we have,” states Bullitt County Judge-Executive Melanie Roberts. “Heart Disease is the number one killer in Bullitt County and must be addressed. We strive to decrease the rate of heart disease in the county in numerous ways. We also, strive to increase the survival rate by ensuring quick access to effective CPR and advanced cardiac care.”
- “Every second counts when responding to cardiac arrests,” states Andrea Renfrow, public health director for Bullitt County. “It is through early access to cardiac care and CPR that we see improved outcomes. We’re proud of this collaborative effort that recognizes the community’s dedication to respond rapidly when individuals experience symptoms of cardiac arrests.”

Approximately 4,600 Kentucky residents die each year due to cardiac arrest that occurs out of the hospital, away from advanced medical assistance. Typically, these events happen in the presence of a family member or friend.

“By becoming HeartSafe, communities are showing they are willing to go the extra mile to ensure the health and well-being of their citizens,” said Bonita Bobo, manager for the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program. “We congratulate the citizens of Bullitt County for their commitment to health.”

The HeartSafe Community program focuses on strengthening links within the community that contribute to the likelihood of survival of cardiac arrest.

To become a HeartSafe Community, applicants must review criteria for the program, complete an application, and mail or fax the application to DPH. The recognition is valid for a period of three years and is renewable through the application process.

Communities must apply to be HeartSafe through the DPH Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program. Applications are available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/info/dpqi/cd/cardiovascular.htm> or by calling (502) 564-7996.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and health care programs, including Medicaid, the Department for Community Based Services and the Department for Public Health. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full and part-time employees throughout the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.