

Nov. 8, 2011

Media contact: Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852, cell: 941-302-1058,
Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

Project contact: Jennifer Tucker-Mogensen, 941-504-1905 or jtucker@veniceymca.org

Cyclovia Venice event will promote safety and fitness

Cycling enthusiasts, walkers, runners, inline skaters and people with strollers from around the region will converge on downtown Venice for Cyclovia Venice from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 20. The inaugural event will be held on the westbound lanes of Venice Avenue between Nokomis Avenue and Venice Beach. The event is free and open to the public.

“The concept behind Cyclovia is to take one of our largest public resources -- our city streets -- and open them to the community to use for physical activity,” said Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) Director Kari Ellingstad. “This demonstrates the varied and multimodal uses for a street other than just vehicular traffic. At the same time, open streets encourage physical activity in residents who may not normally engage in exercise, and, thereby, promotes healthy living.”

Activities and features of the event include:

- 2-mile fun run with SKY Academy Principal Dr. Oleh Bula and students
- 2-mile walk with city of Venice Vice Mayor Kit McKeon. City Council and staff members at noon
- preschool stroller brigade walk
- Friends of Legacy Trail Surrey rides
- bike rentals and a bike valet parking area
- Marathon Zumba and Hip Hop dance party at the Centennial Park Gazebo
- Boot Camp, Tai Chi, Fencing and Tae Kwon Do classes
- health screenings provided by Venice Regional Medical Center
- Humane Society pet adoptions
- Street Chalk Art, face painting
- YMCA free-throw contests and basketball clinic
- beach soccer and volleyball clinics
- paddleboard demonstrations
- beach yoga
- scavenger hunt with prizes

The event also will feature a farmers market with locally grown produce, offerings from health food stores and prepared healthy lunch and snack choices from several local restaurants.

Cyclovia Venice is modeled after very successful open street events held in more than 30 U.S. cities, including San Francisco, Chicago and New York City. The most famous Cyclovia event occurs in Bogotá, Columbia, where over 2 million residents fill the streets to participate in fun and safe physical activity, enjoy healthy foods and socialize with neighbors.

“The event will highlight the vibrancy of Venice by encouraging residents to embrace the many assets of our community while enhancing their health and well-being,” said South County Family YMCA

Healthy Communities Coordinator Jennifer Tucker-Mogensen. “This includes the connectivity to more than 20 miles of recreational trails, including The Legacy Trail and Venetian Waterway Park.”

Cyclovia Venice is a project of the South County Family YMCA's ACHIEVE Initiative, a healthy communities' effort started in 2009 to increase access to physical activities and nutritious foods for all Venice residents. Organizational partners include the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, the city of Venice, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, Venice Regional Medical Center, Sarasota County Health and Human Services, the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and Sarasota County Schools.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit www.veniceymca.com/programs-wellness-racevents-cyclovia.shtml.

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