



Students learn asthma control, basketball at Florence Healthy Hoops

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Asthmatic youths, their parents and their families had a chance Saturday to learn more about the disease, proper nutrition, eat a healthy lunch and hone their basketball skills at Healthy Hoops Pee Dee Challenge.

The event at South Florence High School was put on by Select Health of South Carolina, the South Carolina Asthma Alliance, AmeriHealth Mercy and a variety of community partners and volunteers.

“This is our second summer doing it,” John Schweitz, South Florence High School physical education teacher, said.

There were two goals to accomplish Saturday, Schweitz said.

To educate them about the issues of asthma with the emphasis on exposing them to the fact that even though they might have it, as a child or an adult, there are still ways you can physically keep active for yourself,” Schweitz said of one goal.

The other, he said, was to de-stigmatize asthma.

“There’s a stigma with asthma, a negative stigma, and there shouldn’t be. You can lead a healthy life,” Schweitz, whose daughter suffers from asthma, said.

More than six million children under the age of 18 suffer from asthma, according to a release from Select Health.

“There are quite a few athletes and quite a few students on campus that have it. Most of them are fairly well educated but not as much as they should be,” Schweitz said.

“What we have here, we have clinical personnel from Florence-Darlington Technical College, we have several doctors here, we have several nurses here and there are also

asthma educators who are going to sit down with the family and talk to them about their specific needs and answer any questions they have,” Marilyn Brooks, Select Health, said of the program.

“We use basketball to teach children they can be physically active, they can participate in team sports as long as they have the proper education, the proper information and they’ve learned to manage the disease,” Brooks said.

Participants were given a quick health screening and the, with their parents, offered private sessions with asthma education specialists.

“I hope that they learn they can control their asthma and they don’t have to sit on the sidelines and they can be involved in sports or whatever. We just have to make sure to get (their symptoms) under control,” Deb Polson, asthma educator, said.

Polson said what she and other educators stress is for asthmatics to stay on top of managing the disease.

“They need to have a medical home, have a doctor that’s going to follow up and (the patients) need to keep their appointments. That’s one thing I’ve heard doctors say, they see a child one time and then they don’t see them again for a couple of years, but they’re spending a lot of time in the emergency room. We want to get them to where they have their own doctor and see that doctor regularly and learn to manage this,” Polson said.