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Riverside County to receive grant to help with cool centers as officials grapple with heat-related deaths

The county's cool center program has received a boost at a time when heat-related deaths in the region have spiked.

Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Riverside County – part of Riverside Unified Health System-Public Health -- has been awarded a \$20,000 grant by the Regional Access Project (RAP) Foundation to fund the Cool and Warm Centers Program. The grant was accepted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors Tuesday (July 31).

The action came after supervisors heard from Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer, who reported there were seven heat-related deaths during a 10-day span in July. The deaths occurred throughout the county and all but one individual was older than 79.

“The elderly and the very young are particularly vulnerable to heat, and those with medical issues even more so,” said Kaiser, who pointed out that most of those who died had underlying health issues. “By taking just a few minutes to

perform a Senior Check on our friends and family, we can make sure our seniors are safe when temperatures peak.”

“Cool centers are a life-saving option for our residents,” said Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. “Our vulnerable low-income residents, such as the elderly, disabled, and families with infants and young children living in disadvantaged communities, do not have to suffer and risk the dangers of extreme heat.”

Since 2007, RAP Foundation has helped the CAP Cool and Warm Centers with funding to support nutritional snacks, water and educational materials/games used in the centers in eastern Riverside.

The grant covers the term June 1, 2018, through April 30, 2019.

In announcing the “Senior Check” campaign, Kaiser advised limiting outdoor activity, remaining indoors in air-conditioned buildings, wearing loose and light-colored clothing, taking cool showers or baths and drinking lots of water. Avoid drinking alcohol or liquids containing high amounts of sugar. Make sure not to leave children, elderly, disabled individuals or pets inside unattended vehicles.

Signs of heat-related illness can include: headache, dizziness, muscle weakness or cramps, and nausea and vomiting.

For a list of cooling center locations, visit www.rivcoph.org or www.capriverside.org

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