



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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### **Lakewood Ranch Residents Urged to Participate in Community Brain Health Study**

September 8, 2020, LAKEWOOD RANCH, Fla. - Dr. Jennifer Bencie, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County and Andy Guz, CEO, Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, are proudly asking residents of Lakewood Ranch and the greater Suncoast region to join the Brain Health Initiative in the movement to protect brain health and fight brain illness. As an early step in the initiative's effort to build brain healthy communities, Bencie and Guz, and the Brain Health Initiative's (BHI) Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Stephanie Peabody, are encouraging randomly selected Lakewood Ranch resident to participate in the Brain Health Pilot Study.

Andy Guz shared, "Lakewood Ranch has a rare opportunity to participate in the pilot of what will become a world-class comprehensive initiative of brain health to create brain healthy communities." Randomly selected Lakewood Ranch adult residents will begin receiving invitations to participate in the brain health pilot study in their mailbox of the week of (date) when the BHIP will kick off its pilot study to learn more about brain health.

Dr. Stephanie Peabody further shares, "The pilot study is the next of many brain health projects initiated in and planned for the Suncoast region toward the effort of improving brain health and optimizing performance outcomes for people of all ages, and decreasing the gap between lifespan and brain span. In addition, the BHI will use data analyzed from the pilot to inform the identification of innovative brain health interventions to bring to the Suncoast region through the developing Brain Health Innovation Lab. The innovation lab is being designed as an accelerator lab where solutions from a global explosion of brain health innovations can be brought and tested with the region's residents, workforce, and visitors (young and older) to participate in the clinical trials that promote brain health, fight brain illness, and optimize performance."

Dr. Bencie shares, "understanding what causes brain health problems and how best to prevent brain illness remains one of the biggest medical mysteries of our time. Especially now-when discoveries related to brain health and brain illness, across the lifespan are critically needed worldwide. I hope every community member who is contacted will step-up to help this team of scientists and our region by participating in this study.

Building a brain health community effort began with the 2018 Lakewood Ranch Brain Health Community Stakeholder Prioritization survey. The results of that survey informed the development of the pilot survey. The pilot will collect data specifically about how Lakewood Ranch Residents function mentally, socially, cognitively, and biologically. It will pay special attention to what Lakewood Ranch reported as brain health priorities. Epidemiologist and Research Director of the Brain Health Initiative, Dr. Erin Dunn, shares that "adult residents of the community will be randomly selected to participate in the confidential, online questionnaire and complete a series of cognitive computer games. The survey includes questions about health habits, medical conditions, social relationships, recreational activities, and experiences, and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those participating will also be asked to share information about health behaviors such as exercise, nutrition, smoking, alcohol usage, sleep patterns, as well as demographic information."

Community participation is a critical component of the BHI. Dr. Peabody encourages those residents who receive a recruitment letter to advocate for their own brain health and participate in the study. Help to inform the science that is essential to building a brain healthy community that promotes and protects brain health and fights brain illness. Dr. Peabody notes that "the pilot study will help us capture risk and protective factors linked to brain health across multiple domains. We will be incorporating key 'lessons learned' from other successful community-based, population health projects, including the Framingham Heart Study and Shape Up Somerville to identify ways to protect our brain health across the lifespan at the individual and community level."

The greater the rate of participation, the more successful the BHI will be in establishing a robust brain health baseline of the community and that will lead to greater opportunities for scientific discovery. It will also help recruit brain health innovators and entrepreneurs from around the world to support the brain health of the region.

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**About the Brain Health Initiative** ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, research, innovation, action, and collaboration with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and performance optimization*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.***



## THE BRAIN HEALTH PILOT STUDY IS HERE!

**BRAIN HEALTH MATTERS AND YOUR PARTICIPATION  
IN THE PILOT STUDY WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**CHECK YOUR MAILBOXES!**

**If you are randomly selected to participate in the pilot study,  
please stand up for your brain health and the historical  
opportunity to improve brain health for all.**

**SAY YES.**



**For more information: [brainhealthinitiative.org](http://brainhealthinitiative.org)**



