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| **Press Release****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Tim Jones | tim.jones@heartoftexashealthcare.org325-597-2901 |

**Tips to Stay Safe and Healthy During Labor Day**

*Local hospital urges McCulloch County to keep health in mind during holiday weekend.*

BRADY, Texas (August 31, 2020) – Labor Day weekend is a great opportunity to take some time off work and enjoy the last days of summer with family. As McCulloch County residents gear up for a fun family weekend, local health officials are reminding everyone to take extra caution to avoid summer health risks and to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

“Remembering to look out for yourself and others in the community can help ensure a fun and safe holiday weekend for everyone,” said Dr. Stephen Douglas Bell, Family Medicine physician at Brady Medical Clinic, a service of Heart of Texas Healthcare System. “From preventing COVID-19 to staying cool in the final hot days of the year, being cautious can help you and your family stay safe and healthy.”

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, more than 600,000 people across the state have been infected with COVID-19. Health officials across the United States are urging Americans to wear masks in public and to continue to avoid large groups in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The disease has claimed the lives of nearly 12,000 Texans since the outbreak began.

“Since group gatherings pose a risk, we urge everyone to focus on spending time with family this weekend to ensure a fun holiday while reducing the risk of COVID-19,” Dr. Bell said.

According to Dr. Bell, wearing a face covering in public has been shown to help slow the spread of the disease. Because COVID-19 is most often spread by tiny droplets from the mouth or nose when talking, breathing or coughing, wearing a mask can lower the risk of spreading the virus from one person to another.

**Don’t get dehydrated in the heat**

As we enjoy the last days of summer, many McCulloch County residents will be spending time outdoors to enjoy the weather this weekend. Don’t forget that Labor Day weekend weather can be hot. That is why it is important to drink plenty of water. Heat can quickly lead to dehydration of heat-related illness such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Staying hydrated is an important way to stay healthy in the heat and help you stay cool.

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Additionally, it is important to avoid the midday heat and to pack sunscreen. Direct sunlight can cause skin damage, which can raise the risk of skin cancer. Covering up and wearing SPF 30 or higher sunscreen can help protect you.

**Find a designated driver if drinking**

The Labor Day holiday weekend is a time when traffic accidents are most common, and alcohol consumption is often to blame. If you are planning to drink during the holiday, make sure to have a designated driver.

Additionally, heavy alcohol consumption can adversely affect your health in other ways, including leading to liver ailments and increasing the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

When drinking alcohol outdoors in the summer heat, your body can quickly become dehydrated. If you are going to consume alcoholic beverages, it is recommended that you limit yourself and drink plenty of water.

**Don’t let your health goals slip away**

No matter how you celebrate, don’t use Labor Day Weekend as an excuse to lose track of your goals. Especially if you are following a diet plan to maintain or improve your health, keeping track of what you are eating and planning accordingly is key.

Making healthier choices to holiday snacks does not have to be difficult. Instead of chips, choose fresh, crisp vegetables such as carrot and celery sticks. Fresh fruits such as watermelon and peaches are a great seasonal alternative to cupcakes and cookies.

A long weekend is also a great chance to get moving. Whether it is a walk or jog around the neighborhood or an outdoor game with your family, use the opportunity to have some fun and get some exercise.

“Labor Day weekend is a time to relax and enjoy some time off,” Dr. Bell added. “By taking a few steps to protect your health and health of others, we can ensure a great weekend for everyone.”

Brady Medical Clinic will be closed on Labor Day, September 7. Normal office hours will resume on Tuesday, Sept. 8. If you need urgent healthcare services, the emergency department of the hospital will be available to serve you and your family.

To learn more about healthcare services available in Brady, call Heart of Texas Healthcare System at 325-597-2901 or visit [www.heartoftexashealthcare.org](http://www.heartoftexashealthcare.org).

**About Heart of Texas Healthcare System**Heart of Texas Healthcare System provides healthcare for residents of McCulloch County and the surrounding area. Founded in 2011, the system offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, dialysis services, physical therapy, surgical services, patient education, sleep studies, and more. The system also owns and operates Brady Medical Clinic, which provides family medicine, preventive care, and acute care for minor emergencies. For additional information, please visit www.heartoftexashealthcare.org.

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