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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Daily Leader

Elizabeth Irby is going to jail, but unlike most of those who suffer the same fate and claim their innocence, she actually has done nothing wrong.

The Seward County Health Department clinical director is one of 200 local and area people participating in an MDA Lock-Up event Thursday, June 4, at Liberal's Mid-America Air Museum.

Irby said she needs everyone's help to raise \$800 in funding for muscular dystrophy for the event.

"My boss, (SCHD Administrator) Martha Brown, is sending me to jail for MDA," she said. "On Thursday, June 4, at noon, I am going to be locked up to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association."

Irby joked that, "With your help, they may let me out on good behavior."

Donations can be made to Irby at SCHD at 103 W. Second Street, by calling 626-3369 or e-mailing her at eirby@sewardcountyks.org .

Contributions to Irby's or any other participants bail can be made by check, cash or credit card.

The lock up will take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, and Angela Kessler, district director for the Wichita MDA office, said about 200 people have been recruited from the Liberal area.

“They are trying to raise \$800,” she said. “The bail is set at \$800.

That is what it costs MDA to send one child to summer camp.”

Kessler said the money that is raised from the lock up will stay in Kansas to provide services to the people in the state.

“The money that we’re raising goes to provide support and services to the families that we serve,” she said. “MDA has a very high average.

Almost 77 cents of every dollar goes directly towards the patient, which is much higher than the average.”

Kessler said this year’s goal for the Liberal event is to raise \$15,000, and she said the organization tries to increase or at least maintain its goal every year.

“People are very generous, and they like supporting MDA,” she said.

“When they really have fun with the lock up and really get into the theme of the event, it’s easy and fun to raise the money.”

In addition to lock ups throughout Kansas, Kessler said MDA does other fund-raising events throughout the year as well.

“We have our Shamrocks Against Dystrophy program,” she said. That’s where people buy a shamrock at a convenience store or a location for a dollar. That’s donated to MDA. We have our Hop-a-Thon program, which is a disabilities awareness program.”

Kessler said that program is geared towards pre-school and elementary children.

“They help raise money, but it’s also an education piece,” she said.

“They also learn about children with disabilities.”

Kessler said the fund-raiser that people are familiar with most on a local level is the Fill the Boot program.

“The Liberal Fire Department participates in that, and of course, everybody knows about the Jerry Lewis Labor Day telethon,” she said of other MDA money makers.

The MDA lock up does not make its way to Liberal on an annual basis, and Kessler said how communities are chosen for the event depends on the state in which it takes place.

“Our office covers 69 counties in Kansas,” she said. “We look at the different communities that we target throughout the year. We like to target Liberal. We have lots of people who are nominated from the Liberal area. It’s a great part of the state.”

Kessler said there are 43 different types of MD, and MDA covers all of them.

“Because there are so many types and there are multi-levels, it’s not like saying you have a

cold,” she said. “Some of them are genetic.

Some of them are not. Some of them we don’t know why they’re not.”

Kessler said right now, it costs MDA \$85 a minute for research.

“Every day, we’re finding things and making new strides in different areas,” she said. “Just in the last two years, MDA helped find a cure for Pompey’s Disease. That was a great day for MDA and the people that we serve. It’s an ongoing battle for us, but it’s one we’re willing to fight.”

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