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Youth Led Event Promotes Substance Use Prevention and Mental Health

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (October 17, 2016) -- Oakland County teens are taking a lead role in a countywide initiative to promote good mental health, as well as substance use prevention during a free event from 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday, October 29th at the Emagine Theatre in Royal Oak.

“Youth Voices” is being coordinated by the teen collaborative, PEEPS (Peers Educating and Empowering Peers), which represents youth members of the Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities (ACHC).

“The fact that this important message about substance use prevention and maintaining good mental health is being shared by teens for teens, makes it even more meaningful,” said Julie Brenner, Executive Director of ACHC. “Our goal - the goal of our teens - is to create a safe environment where youth learn, participate, and leave feeling empowered to make healthy life choices.”

Teenagers Nina Hesse and Raven Rogers are members of the PEEPS collaborative. “The event brings different groups of teens together for a common cause,” said Rogers. “Kids should come, not only to learn what healthy choices are, but to learn how to make those healthy choices,” adds Hesse.

Funding for the event is being provided in part by the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Grant held by Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority (OCCMHA.) OCCMHA also helps to fund ACHC. Both agencies are members of the Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force which is facilitated by the Oakland County Health Division.

“When you consider that one out of five teens has abused prescription drugs before the age of 13, and that suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 and 24, it truly demonstrates the need for events like “Youth Voices,” says OCCMHA Executive Director and CEO, Willie Brooks.

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Inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities.

The event will feature a performance by Magician Anthony Grupido, as well as a presentation by youth advocate Kenny Spears. Teens will also be educated on the Okay2say program designed to empower Michigan students, parents, school personnel, community mental health service programs, and law enforcement to share and respond to student safety threats.

Oakland County students in grades 8 through 12 can register to attend “Youth Voices” at www.achcmi.org.

About OCCMHA

Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority is the public mental health system responsible for identifying, influencing, and delivering services and supports to approximately 25,000 Oakland County residents, including individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, adults with mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance, and persons with substance use disorders. Most of these individuals have Medicaid.

OCCMHA’s current network of service providers include: Common Ground, Community Housing Network, Community Living Services, Community Network Services, Easterseals Michigan, MORC, Oakland Family Services, Inc., and Training and Treatment Innovations. A complete list of substance use service providers is available on OCCMHA’s website. For more information about OCCMHA call (800) 341-2003 or visit www.occmha.org.

About ACHC

The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities formed as an extension of the successful Coalition of Healthy Communities (CHC) network. CHC was founded in 1993 by four local coalition groups seeking to strengthen their existing collaboration through the creation of an umbrella organization. In 2003, CHC members, with the support of Oakland County’s Office of Substance Abuse Services, launched the Alliance of Coalition for Healthy Communities to begin the next phase in Oakland Prevention. Today, the alliance has grown to include seventeen community prevention coalitions serving over 40 local communities. Individuals and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy and drug-free communities can also become members. For more information visit www.achcmi.org.

About the Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force

The Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force is a partnership of Oakland County Department of Health and Human Services, Common Ground, Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority, Easterseals Michigan, Training and Treatment Innovations, and Oakland Schools. Its mission is to raise awareness and provide the necessary tools and resources to schools, families, and youth to prevent suicide. For more information visit <https://www.oakgov.com/health/partnerships/Pages/Youth-Suicide-Prevention-.aspx>.

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