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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Significant Progress for Bristol Prevention Coalition for a Drug-Free Community

(BRISTOL, CT – September 18, 2017) Almost to the day one year after receiving a five-year federal grant, The Bristol Prevention Coalition for a Drug-Free Community has achieved several milestones in helping prevent substance abuse in Bristol. Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and administered through the City of Bristol, the federal grant totals \$125,000 per year. After an extensive community assessment, the Coalition's 2017 action plan addresses alcohol and marijuana use among 6th through 12th grade Bristol students. The grant specifies the funds must be used for prevention and education on specific categories of abuse which are prescription drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana misuse. The Coalition decided to focus on alcohol and marijuana abuse after analyzing current data and taking into consideration local conditions in the Bristol community. The vision for the Coalition is to develop a culture of awareness and sustained action that will promote positive youth development resulting in a healthier community. The grants are currently being used in 24 Connecticut towns.

“We are extremely proud that Bristol was the only Connecticut grant applicant to receive this year one grant. This is truly a community effort as the grant rules stipulate that 12 different sectors of the community must commit to be involved and actively participate in achieving the agreed upon goals,” said Eileen McNulty, Bristol Director of Community and Youth Services & Grant Project Director. “Thanks to dozens of citizens’ input at monthly and quarterly meetings, we have hit the ground running and already hit many benchmarks in helping the community.”

These activities include:

- Branding the overall initiative titled “B.E.S.T. – 4 – Bristol.” (**B**ristol **E**liminating **S**ubstance abuse **T**ogether)
- Developing meaningful collateral to be used for events attended such as the Bristol Health Fair and Rockwell Park Summer Festival
- Co-sponsoring law enforcement’s youth basketball tournament in June
- Establishing and implementing three social media sites
- Initiating a new, dedicated website
- Participating with school officials in freshman orientation seminars
- Hiring a project coordinator, Jesse Mancinone, to manage the tactical efforts
- Working with the Bristol Boys and Girls Club on educational events and programs

“The B.E.S.T. – 4 – Bristol mission is to work for unification of the community to promote wellness in our culture through increasing education, implementing strategies, and enforcing policy to prevent substance abuse by our young people including other key figures who impact their development,” said Mancinone. “We are doing this by initiating collaborations of community organizations, City groups, and private individuals in the Coalition’s initiatives and activities.”

Most of the tactics have focused on building and engaging members in subcommittee workgroups; providing prevention and education on frameworks and strategies to sector leaders based on ongoing data analysis; and disseminating information via social media, events and festivals. One recent unique activity was staging a mock car accident caused by substance abuse to clearly illustrate the dangers and long-range effects substance abuse can cause.



Bristol students observe a “mock” car crash that was caused by A driver with a substance abuse problem

“There might not be any bigger issue facing our community than keeping our kids safe, healthy and preparing them for adulthood. The key efforts are focused on prevention and education,” said Bristol Mayor Ken Cockayne. “This coalition is an effective model for Bristol to improve health in our youth community. We could not accomplish this crucial work without support from the community. It’s really great to see various sectors within our community work together to make Bristol a better place.”

About the Bristol Prevention Coalition

The Coalition began in the early 1990s as the Bristol Youth Prevention Council, which was funded by a small grant. Since then, the coalition’s name and membership has changed, but its focus on reducing youth substance abuse has remained constant. Today the coalition’s members come from all 12 community sectors: school, law enforcement, youth (age 18 and younger), parents, business, media, civic/volunteer groups, healthcare, religious organization, local, state governmental agency, youth-serving organization and other concerned organizations. Leadership and guidance comes from the Coalition’s Executive Committee.