

August 24, 2021

**Candlelight Vigil to Mark International Overdose Awareness Day in Winchester**

*Event to bring light to the darkness of addiction*

**WINCHESTER** – The Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition (NSVSAC) will mark International Overdose Awareness Day with a candlelight vigil on August 31<sup>st</sup> in Winchester. The event will memorialize lives lost to overdose. International Overdose Awareness Day is a global event aimed at raising awareness of overdose and reducing the stigma of drug related deaths. The event in Winchester will include Active Minds Speaker Pablo Campos who will share his story of recovery and will encourage others to seek help, build peer support and create a healthier sense of community.

The event will be held in front of the Old Civil War Museum on Loudoun Street in Winchester at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. The NSVSAC will be offering free NARCAN training and distribution and other medication safety resources. The event will include a bell ringing to signify each community member who has died of an overdose this year.

The addiction epidemic has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, opioid overdose deaths increased by 96 percent in the region, compared to 2019. Last year, 53 people died of an overdose in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. This year, 20 people have lost their lives to overdose.

“We know that there are families in our community who are suffering in silence due to the loss of a loved one to an overdose, or due to having someone they love who is currently battling the disease. We want to send a message to these families that they are not alone, we acknowledge their grief, and we are gathering to help overcome the stigma of addiction,” says NSVSAC Executive Director Lauren Cummings.

The event is being held in partnership with the Northwestern Community Services Board Prevention Department and the Northwestern Prevention Collaborative.

Free International Overdose Awareness Day t-shirts, badges, lanyards, and wristbands will be given out to attendees. You can also show your support and bring awareness by using the hashtag #OverdoseAware and #EndOverdose on social media.

For more information visit [www.roadtorecovery.info](http://www.roadtorecovery.info) or call 540-536-5000.

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## About NSVSAC

The Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition collaborates with community partners to take the lead in identifying and developing effective resources to ensure that the necessary continuum of care for substance use and addiction services is available to all members of the community in the greater Winchester, Virginia area. Formed in 2014, the Coalition and its public and private sector partners have worked to compassionately reduce the stigma of addiction, improve access to substance use treatment services and decrease the number of overdoses to combat the opioid epidemic in Virginia. For more information on the Coalition, please visit [www.roadtorecovery.info](http://www.roadtorecovery.info).

