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New Drug Prevention Initiative Designed to Give Youth a Reason to Say No to Drugs
Project to provide home drug testing kits to parents in the Northern Shenandoah Valley

WINCHESTER – The Rotary Club of Winchester in partnership with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition (NSVSAC) has been named the recipient of a Rotary Foundation Global Grant that aims to give youth a reason to say “no” to drugs, identify early substance use, and intervene before more severe consequences occur. On Thursday, the Rotary Club of Winchester presented leaders from the NSVSAC with a check for \$91,000 for the “Give Me a Reason” youth drug prevention initiative.

Teens who abuse drugs have a greater risk of developing an addiction when they are adults. Ninety percent of Americans with a substance use disorder (SUD) started smoking, drinking or using other drugs before age 18. Drug use can have long-term, negative effects on the developing teenage brain and research shows that 25% of youth who begin abusing prescription drugs at age 13 or younger met clinical SUD criteria for addiction at some point in their young lives. The best way to uncover a teen drug problem is through the use of a home drug test coupled with supportive family-based strategies to help youth to make prosocial choices.

To identify substance use among teens, the “Give Me A Reason” youth drug prevention initiative will provide free saliva-based drug testing kits to parents and caregivers who suspect substance use by their teens. The non-invasive test is then given within the privacy of a home with results in about 10 minutes. Use of the kits, and supportive conversations led by parents and caregivers, will give youth a reason to say “no” to drug use. Perhaps more importantly, the kits and family conversations will reinforce teens’ positive life choices.

“This program is designed to give youth another reason to resist peer pressure to experiment with drugs, and it gives parents the tools to know if their child is using substances,” says NSVSAC Executive Director Lauren Cummings. “This program is not meant to be punitive, but rather to give parents a tool to develop a level of truth and to provide resources if help is needed,” Cummings added.

“The Rotary Club of Winchester in coordination with the other area Rotary Clubs (Frederick County, Clarke County, Warren County and Front Royal) is thrilled to be working in cooperation with the Substance Abuse Coalition to initiate a youth drug prevention program in our area,” says Rotary Club of Winchester Former President Julia Connell. “*Rotary International* offers the opportunity for Rotary Clubs to apply for grants to support projects that are measurable and sustainable, and that fall within one of Rotary’s key areas of focus. The ‘Give Me A Reason’ initiative aligns with Rotary’s focus on Disease Prevention and Treatment. The Global Grant presents an opportunity for our local Rotary Clubs to make a meaningful contribution to support

the ongoing efforts of the NSV Substance Abuse Coalition in fighting the drug addiction crisis in our community," says Connell.

The free drug testing kits will be distributed at a number of sites in the community. The NSVSAC is continuing to identify partners who are interested in serving as distribution sites.

The "Give Me a Reason" youth drug prevention initiative will also train professionals throughout the community to become certified in SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment), an evidence-based approach to identify individuals who use alcohol and other drugs at risky levels. SBIRT uses a public health approach that provides opportunities for early intervention before more severe consequences occur. The Rotary "Give Me a Reason" youth drug prevention initiative will also provide funding for eligible youth (18 and under) who are referred to intensive outpatient treatment, but who do not have insurance or the means to pay for it.

In March the NSVSAC was the beneficiary of the Kaleidoscope Gala, a partnership this year between the Rotary Clubs of Winchester, Frederick County, Clarke County, Warren County and Front Royal. The fundraising event brought in net proceeds of \$38,000 which will be used to draw a 50 percent match from the Rotary World Fund. The World Fund will also match, dollar-for-dollar a \$17,000 contribution from International Partners, the Rotary Club of Kaohsiung, Taiwan and the Rotary Club of Baroda Savajinagari, India. This will bring the total Global Grant funding to \$91,000.

The NSVSAC plans to have the kits available to parents by January, 2019.

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