

Catholic Charities of Staten Island And CYO to Combat Island's Drug Epidemic:

Begins New Year By Launching Island-Wide "Staten Island H.E.A.R.T Initiative"

STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK, USA, January 6, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Catholic Charities of Staten Island](#) and the CYO has announced it will be launching a program called the Staten Island H.E.A.R.T Initiative to help stem the tide of drug use in our community. The acronym, which stands for Heroin Epidemic Archdiocese Response Team, is designed to target the youth in our community by using the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), its coaches and membership to inform, assist, and encourage families to combat the scourge.

The Staten Island H.E.A.R.T initiative has partnered with Staten Island University Hospital for NARCAN training for coaches, refs, and any parish seeking assistance, as well as Carl's House which will refer those in need of treatment to a proper facility. The program will also offer referrals for counseling services through Catholic Charities Parish Counseling Network, which offers up to 6 counseling sessions for families in need for \$10 per session.

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"The heartbreak that is Staten Island's drug epidemic is ever present at SIUH. It speeds our way in ambulances, enters through the doors of our ERs and drug treatment programs." said Donna Proske, Staten Island University Hospital's Executive Director. "In partnering with Catholic Charities newly-launched Staten Island HEART Initiative, we take another step into our community to pick up the pace of life-saving NARCAN training and connect with neighbors to communicate opportunities for prevention and treatment."

"This partnership will make resources more readily available for those who so desperately need it," said Marco DiDonna of Carl's House. "It's a community problem that affects the entire borough, and we're proud to start the new year as a member of the H.E.A.R.T. initiative."

Catholic Charities CEO Vincent M. Ignizio along with Program Director Michelle LaVignera, and CYO



County Coordinator Mike Neely will be spearheading the initiative.

“We at Catholic Charities have a responsibility to do our part in addressing the community’s needs,” said Vincent Ignizio, CEO of Catholic Charities of Staten Island. “This epidemic is killing a generation and threatens all of our kids. By using the sports organizations under the CYO umbrella we can speak to kids as only a coach can. We will also offer assistance to those in need, referrals for treatment facilities, counseling, and if need be enforcement with tips we will forward in partnership with DA McMahon.”

“Our goal is to provide a safe and trusted channel for youth to reach out for help,” said Program Director Michelle LaVignera. “The Staten Island H.E.A.R.T. program provides assistance in taking the first difficult steps toward getting help and we do so in the caring, dignified way of Catholic Charities.”

“The CYO will use its access to players, coaches, parish coordinators and parents to help combat this growing epidemic targeting our kids and families here on Staten Island,” said Michael Neely, CYO County Coordinator. “We aim to be party of the solution.”

[Richmond County District Attorney](#), Michael McMahon, recently put forth The Overdose Response Initiative designed to directly combat those dealing drugs on the island through use of a public tip hotline as well as additional investigative follow-up into any drug related deaths.

“Combating Staten Island’s opioid and heroin epidemic requires an all-hands on deck approach and I am thankful for the borough’s Catholic community for joining us in this fight with the H.E.A.R.T Initiative,” said District Attorney McMahon. “By utilizing the built-in support network of local parishes, schools, and CYO programs, my office



and Catholic Charities of Staten Island can better help those suffering from addiction illness find the resources and services they need on their path to recovery.”



For more information about the Staten Island H.E.A.R.T Initiative or to seek help please visit www.catholiccharitiesofstatenisland.org and click the SI HEART Tab or to report an anonymous drug tip please dial the District Attorney’s Drug Hotline at 718-876-5839.

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