

Christy A. Smith of the Unicoi County Prevention Coalition Recently Featured on Close Up Radio

ERWIN, TN, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Unicoi County Prevention Coalition is intensifying its efforts to combat substance use and mental health challenges in the region through new prevention, intervention, and recovery initiatives. Facing a rise in opioid overdoses, mental health issues, and youth vaping and marijuana use, Christy A. Smith, founder of the nonprofit Unicoi County Prevention Coalition, is bringing hope and resources to a community deeply affected by economic hardship, natural disasters, and generational trauma.

Born from the vision of a writer and outreach coordinator with deep roots in Unicoi County, the Unicoi County

Prevention Coalition has evolved into a pivotal force against substance misuse in the Appalachian region. Since 2017, Unicoi County Prevention Coalition, under the direction of Smith, has been independently operating to secure funding and develop programs addressing underage drinking, nicotine use, prescription drug abuse and marijuana use among youth.

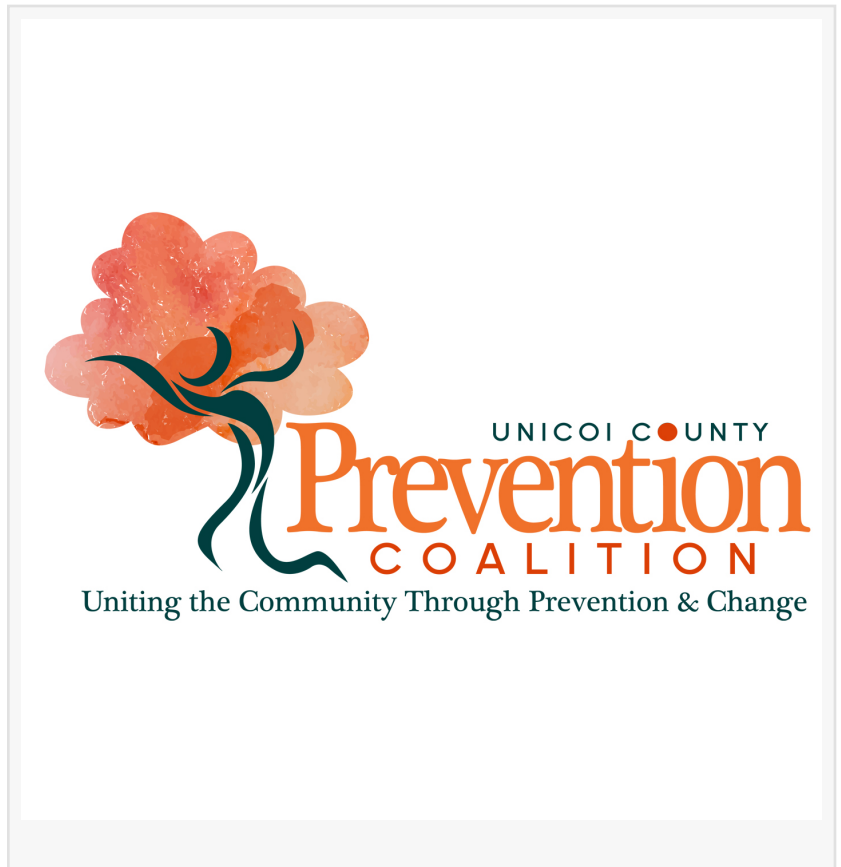
"Our community faces unique challenges—from the lasting effects of adverse childhood experiences and genetic predispositions to the influx of dangerous substances like opioids and methamphetamine," explains Smith. "But through education, engagement, and empowerment, we're changing the narrative. Programs like our Hope Mentoring and L.E.A.D. (Law Enforcement Against Drugs and Violence) initiatives are proving that when we invest in our youth, we can break cycles of addiction and build healthier futures."

The Hope Mentoring Program pairs at-risk middle schoolers with high school leaders, fostering



academic improvement and reducing disruptive behaviors and drug violations. Complementing this effort, the Coalition offers teen mental health first aid training and supports local juvenile courts by holding guardians accountable, emphasizing parental involvement as a key to prevention.

Despite progress, the region grapples with systemic barriers including job scarcity, limited transportation, and inadequate treatment options. The devastation caused by recent floods has further strained resources by damaging local industries and infrastructure, including the county hospital. To address these challenges, Smith plans to establish a community center that will serve as a safe haven offering daytime services for the homeless, after school programs for children, and recovery support for those battling addiction.



In addition to youth-focused programs, the Coalition has distributed over 7,000 medication lock boxes to promote safe storage of prescription drugs and reduce accidental access by children and teens. It also educates the public about the dangers of opioids, counterfeit pills, and emerging substances like Delta 8 THC.

Smith continues to advocate for increased mental health services, especially for individuals transitioning out of the judicial system, to provide a "one-stop" hub for comprehensive care that includes employment assistance, health insurance access, and substance use treatment.

"Recovery is not just about stopping drug use; it's about rebuilding your life and your community," Smith adds. "Our goal is to create an environment where everyone has the tools and support to thrive, no matter their past."

About Unicoi County Prevention Coalition

The Unicoi County Prevention Coalition, founded by Christy A. Smith, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health across Unicoi County, Tennessee. Through community partnerships, education, and direct support services, the Coalition is empowering individuals and families to lead healthier, drug-free lives. Established in 2017, the Coalition continues to expand its reach and impact in the Appalachian region.

Close Up Radio recently featured Christy A. Smith, founder of the Unicoi County Prevention Coalition, in an interview with Jim Masters on Wednesday September 3rd at 10am EST

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

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For more information about Christy A. Smith and the Unicoi County Prevention Coalition, please visit <https://www.ucpreventioncoalition.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/people/Unicoi-County-Prevention-Coalition/100064363735572/>

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