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## **For Immediate Release**

### ***Mon Co. QRT joins 54 other counties for Free Naloxone Day in nine locations***

**MORGANTOWN, WV (Aug. 30, 2022)** — At last spring’s Save a Life Day, which provided free naloxone and training to community members at several stations, Tory Watring had the opportunity to talk to several community members, including to one woman who arrived for training for the medication that can quickly reverse an opioid overdose. “She shared that naloxone saved her life,” said Watring, a member of the Monongalia County Quick Response Team (QRT) as well as a peer recovery support specialist with West Virginia Sober Living. “It gave her the opportunity to become a mom to her kids and a daughter to her parents.”

At first, the woman was reluctant to receive the training, but when she left, she said, “Thank you for what you do.”

“We’ve had numerous people share that they have family or friends that use illicit substances,” Watring added. “They are now more comfortable keeping naloxone and knowing how to administer it.”

On Thursday, Sept. 8, Monongalia County QRT members will once again be participating in Save a Life Day, also called Free Naloxone Day.

Sometimes known by its brand name, Narcan, naloxone can revive someone who has stopped breathing after suffering an opioid overdose.

And even though this will be the Mon County QRT’s third event of this kind, it will be the first time that free naloxone events will be taking place in all 55 counties, with the support of the West Virginia Office of Drug Control Policy as well as the University of Charleston School of Pharmacy and the West Virginia Office of Maternal Child & Family Health.

In Monongalia County, the event will take place from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at nine locations. Those include three McDonald’s restaurants, in Westover, Star City and Sabraton; as well as the Westover VFW; the WVU Rec Center; the Mountainlair; Dering-Henson Funeral Home; Milan Puskar HealthRight and the Morgantown Art Party.

Volunteers will be at HealthRight until 4 p.m. and at the Morgantown Art Party from 5-7 p.m.

Those nine sites will be part of 168 all over West Virginia in which volunteers train community members on how to use naloxone as well as distribute doses. Individuals or small groups of people can be trained when they arrive at a location.

“The big difference in this Free Naloxone Day is that all 55 counties are partaking for the first time ever,” said Brittany Irick, the Monongalia County QRT coordinator. “In the past, a lot of the counties have participated but we weren’t able to get every single one on board. But thanks to their neighboring counties, they are able to help make this happen.”

During the Mon County QRT’s last event in May, 810 kits containing 1,620 doses of naloxone were distributed. This year, Irick said, the goal is to hand out 1,000 kits and 2,000 doses.

The training takes only 10-15 minutes, Watring said. Narcan is administered as a nasal medication, making it very easy to use.

“It should be in every emergency kit and medicine cabinet,” Watring added. “It’s not just for people who use drugs. Someone’s elderly loved one could mistakenly take too much pain medication and need naloxone. It’s safe for children, the elderly, anyone.

“You cannot overdose on naloxone. It saves lives. It gives people the opportunity to have a second chance at life.”

Watring recalled a story from one of her co-workers, who was staying in a hotel when he discovered that another guest was having a medical emergency. After conferring with the front desk clerk, Watring’s co-worker grabbed a naloxone kit that he had with him and administered it to a woman who was gray and not breathing.

“About 30-45 seconds later, the woman gasped and sat straight up,” Watring said. “He stayed with her until EMS arrived.”

That is the goal of naloxone – to administer a dose (and a second one if needed) and call 911 so that the individual can receive further treatment.

West Virginia lost an average of two family members to fatal doses each day in 2021, down from more than three lives lost a day, on average, in 2020, according to information released by the state Office of Drug Control Policy. This improvement is due in part to the expansion of free naloxone programs, including Save a Life Day events, which began in 2020.

The West Virginia Drug Intervention Institute is also providing more than 10,000 fentanyl test strips statewide and will be at every Monongalia County location, Irick noted.

“Many people overdose because they don’t realize that the drugs they are using have been cut with fentanyl, which is extremely deadly,” she said.

Also, COVID-19 vaccines will be available at the WVU Mountainlair and the Westover McDonald’s for the duration of the event, as well as the HealthRight until 4 p.m., Irick added. Formed in 2019, the Monongalia County QRT is grant-funded through Monongalia County Health Department and brings together different organizations, including peer recovery

counselors (PRCs), law enforcement, social services, public health workers and more. Members meet weekly to strategize on how to lessen opioid misuse in the community, while PRCs attempt to visit anyone who has overdosed within 72 hours in order to connect them with services and help.

“Part of our efforts with the QRT is to prevent overdoses and overdose fatalities,” Irick said. “Prevention is a huge part of the work that we do, and getting naloxone all across the county is just another prevention effort.”

For up-to-date information on health and wellness in Monongalia County, check out [monchd.org](http://monchd.org) and follow the health department on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd.

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