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## **For Immediate Release**

### ***Monongalia County QRT seeks volunteers, donations for Save a Life Day***

**MORGANTOWN, WV (July 20, 2021)** — Members of the Monongalia County Quick Response Team (QRT) will be out in force for Save a Life Day on Saturday, Sept. 25, to teach naloxone administration to anyone interested in learning and also to give away free applications of the medication, which reverses the effects of an opioid overdose.

About 12 stations staffed with around eight volunteers each will be set up at locations around Monongalia County. Anyone interested in learning more about naloxone is encouraged to stop at one of the stations, which will be in operation from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“The idea is to educate as many people on overdose,” said Jon Dower, director of operations of West Virginia Sober Living and a member of the Monongalia County QRT. “There is the potential that lay people can come to a site where someone is misusing a substance and literally save a life by administering naloxone.”

But that’s not the only scenario in which naloxone access and knowing how to use it can come in handy, Dower noted.

“We’ve seen a large prevalence in the geriatric community who, because of cognitive dysfunction or dementia, take too much of their medication,” he said. “And we’ve also seen children get into a medicine cabinet.”

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One of Dower's elderly relatives died from an accidental overdose, so he has firsthand knowledge of not only the grief it can cause but also how easily this can be prevented.

"I believe naloxone should be in every first aid kit and every medicine cabinet," Dower added. "Individuals should know the warning signs of what an opiate overdose looks like and know how to respond to an overdose."

Added PRC Russell Wyatt: "That's what's going to give somebody the opportunity to live another day, to change their lives for the better and to continue relationships with their loved ones."

QRT member Dan McCawley of WV PEERS, a network of certified peer recovery coaches (PRCs) with lived addiction experience, said individuals can be trained one-on-one or as small groups of people based on whoever shows up at a location.

"We'll just train them as they arrive, however it works best," he added. "If just one person rolls up, we'll teach them too."

In addition to naloxone, attendees can also pick up a swag bag of promotional items from Monongalia County QRT members, such as MCHD WIC and Monongalia County Child Advocacy Center, McCawley said.

The Monongalia County QRT is made up of members representing Monongalia County Health Department, which secured grant funding to establish the group; WV PEERS; other addiction specialists; law enforcement; EMS; health care workers; social agencies; faith groups and more.

When MECCA 911, EMS or a police department get a report of an individual who has overdosed, it is shared to a HIPAA-compliant Dropbox account. WV PEERS members check reports frequently and try to make contact with the individual within 24 to 72 hours of the incident.

The main goal is to get the person into treatment. However, whether or not the individual is ready to commit to recovery, PRCs can also help with connections to health and social services as well as naloxone.

Wyatt, also a member of the QRT, has been organizing volunteers, donors and sponsors for Save a Life Day.

When it comes to locations, so far, McDonald's in Sabraton and Westover are on board thanks to owner and philanthropist John Ebert, Wyatt said. Other locations include Sweet Southern Smoke BBQ in Sabraton and Star City Fire & EMS.

Wyatt and Dower also anticipate having stations set up somewhere off the Pierpont exit of Interstate 79, along the Grafton Road area, in Blacksville and also at locations on both West Virginia University's downtown and Evansdale campuses.

"Some of these details are still being finalized, but we also would appreciate anyone who would have a high-traffic area location they could let us use for this event to let us know," Wyatt said.

More information about all the locations will be released closer to the event date and volunteers also will hold up signs to alert drivers and pedestrians to naloxone stations.

Sponsors who donate at least \$200 will get their logo on a T-shirt, Wyatt noted. And while Pepsi, Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks have offered water, coffee and doughnuts, additional food and beverages for volunteers also would be welcome, he added.

While dozens of volunteers have committed to working during the event, community members who would like to help out are encouraged to sign up. All volunteers will take a "train the trainer" course to learn how to administer naloxone, Dower said.

Between members of WV PEERS and Joe Klass, MCHD Threat Preparedness specialist and paramedic, about 1,500 naloxone trainings have been held in Monongalia County since the QRT's inception, with a mix of participants ranging from one or two per class up to more than 100.

"The training is fast, easy and, more importantly, it will give participants the knowledge, skills and confidence to save a life," Klass said. "In medicine, it's rare to have a drug that is easy to administer, highly effective and that works quickly. Naloxone is all three of these things, and it's important that we promote its use and give access to this lifesaving drug in all populations."

Added Dower: "I think from watching TV, people think administering naloxone is difficult, but it's not. Naloxone is a single-use package that goes up one nostril and then it's pressed. It's as simple as that. We're not asking individuals to engage in interactions that involve bodily fluids. It's a quick administration of medication and the goal is to get 911 involved to get more help."

And when Dower has saved someone's life by using naloxone, he realizes it's not just that individual he has helped.

"I'm impacting mothers, fathers, children and siblings, all the loved ones of that person," Dower said. "Spending five seconds saving one person's life is saving pain from many lives."

Anyone who wants to donate a location, time or funds can call WV PEERS at 304-602-3305.

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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