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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release on October 15, 2018

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DA McMahon Announces Opioid Safety Initiative for Staten Island Businesses

RCDA partners with CHASI and TYSA to equip local bar and restaurant owners with the knowledge and tools necessary to prevent overdoses and save lives

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon today announced the launch of the Opioid Safety Initiative for local Staten Island businesses. Partnering with Community Health Action Staten Island (CHASI) and Tackling Youth Substance Abuse (TYSA), the initiative aims to combat heroin and opioid abuse by educating local bar and restaurant owners and their staff on recognizing the signs of an overdose and how to react if one occurs in their establishment.

So far this year, 78 Staten Islanders have lost their lives to an overdose, with an additional 202 lives saved with the overdose reversal spray Narcan. Since 2016, approximately 130 overdoses occurred outside the home and in public places. As part of the initiative, Narcan kits and training will be provided to participating business owners. The initiative aims to prevent fatal overdoses from occurring in bars and restaurants, such as the one that claimed the life of Staten Islander Jonathan Ayers, who fatally overdosed at the Red Robin in the Staten Island Mall two years ago, September 9th, 2016.

Additionally, the initiative includes toolkits and signage with strategies on safety planning in case of an opioid emergency; the distribution of “Staten Islanders Against Drug Abuse” lawn signs and SIHOPE literature; Safe Ride Alternatives posters to display in establishments so patrons are aware of the alternative ways to arrive home safely to combat drunk driving, and ‘Angel Shot’ training and posters – when an individual feels like they are in an uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situation, they will be able to order an “Angel Shot,” which will inform the bartender how to step in and assist the patron.

District Attorney Michael E. McMahon said, “As the heroin and opioid epidemic continues to devastate the lives of Staten Islanders, we as a community are joining together to fight back. By giving local businesses the knowledge and tools necessary to prevent overdoses, we can save lives and better help those suffering from addiction illness find treatment. I am proud to partner with CHASI and TYSA on this important

initiative, which will benefit all people of Staten Island. I also want to thank Ann Ayers for her courage and strength in sharing her son's heartbreaking story so that we can hopefully prevent these kinds of tragedies from occurring in the future."

Ann Ayers, a Staten Island mother who lost her son to an overdose, said, "My name is Ann Ayers and 2 years ago my 27 year old son Jonathan lost a long battle with opioids when he overdosed inside of a Red Robin restaurant.

After an overdose Narcan needs to be administered ASAP. Brain damage can occur within only a few minutes of an opioid overdose as the result of a lack of oxygen to the brain. A lot of overdoses happen in bathrooms of businesses. It might take a few minutes for someone to go in the bathroom to even notice a person has overdosed. By the time EMTs are called and arrive on the scene, it might be too late for most.

Some people think only people in professions such as doctors can save people's lives. Narcan gives this incredible ability to anyone nearby. Administering Narcan not only saves their life, but also gives them another chance to turn their life around. I don't know if receiving Narcan sooner by an employee inside that restaurant would have saved Jonathan's life, but it certainly would have improved his chances."

Jazmin Rivera, Director of Behavioral Health, Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness said, "The Opioid Safety Initiative for Businesses is a strategy born out of the TYSA coalition which comprised of over 50 cross-sector partners on Staten Island, including the Richmond County District Attorney's office and Community Health Action of Staten Island- that are all working together to reduce youth and young adult substance use in our communities. With the expertise of treatment providers, law enforcement, and public health, we've been able to engage local businesses to strengthen their ability to respond to the opioid epidemic with a population level lens."

Donna Demarast, Director of Harm Reduction at Community Health Action Staten Island said, "We are informing businesses and the general public that opioid use of any kind creates risk of overdose, and that steps can be taken to lessen risk of fatal overdose. These include: don't use drugs alone, as your "partner" can call 911 and resuscitate you with Narcan if you accidentally overdose; avoid mixing opioids and other substances including alcohol and benzodiazepines; if you've had a recent "break" from using opioids, your risk of death increases when you revert to your regular dose. And finally, we're informing Staten Islanders that help is available! We're encouraging our community members to reach out to our and other organizations who provide education, harm reduction and substance abuse treatment services."

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