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For Information Contact

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**Community Event to Focus on the Local Opioid Epidemic**

***Thursday, June 8 – 6 p.m.at Forest Park High School***

The Community Healthcare Coalition of Greater Prince William will present a community event: “Opioid Epidemic: Let’s Talk About It!” Thursday, June 8 on opioid abuse and addiction, which is increasing at alarming rates locally, throughout Virginia and across the United States. These potentially addictive drugs include prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and Vicodin, as well as dangerous synthetic drugs like fentanyl.

State Health Commissioner Marissa Levine, MD, MPH, FAAFP will be a keynote speaker at the event, which will be held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at Forest Park High School, 15721 Forest Park Drive in Woodbridge. Doors open at 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

In November 2016, Dr. Levine declared the Virginia opioid crisis a public health emergency. The declaration came in response to the growing number of overdoses attributed to opioid abuse, and evidence that Carfentanil, a highly dangerous synthetic opioid used to sedate large animals such as elephants, has made its way into Virginia.

“I invite all concerned residents to attend this event,” Dr. Levine said. “Opioid addiction affects all sectors of society, rural and urban, rich and poor, young and old. I’m convinced that communities that work together will grow stronger in the process and connect in ways that will protect health and promote well-being for all.”

The number of fatal opioid overdoses continues to rise sharply across the region, state and country. In the Greater Prince William Area, which includes Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, the opioid overdose deaths increased from 29 in 2013 to an estimated 56 in 2016, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

(more)

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The summit will offer information from local community experts and will include a showing of “Chasing the Dragon: The Life of an Opioid Addict.” This documentary released last year by the FBI and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, was largely filmed in the Greater Prince William Area. It provides explicit, first-person accounts of people who have either abused opioids or whose children have abused opioids with tragic consequences. The video’s title refers to the cycle of addiction and users’ pursuit of the so-called “ultimate” high.

The video presentation will be followed by a panel discussion featuring those on the front lines of the opioid crisis including Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue, the Court System, Public Health, the FBI, the DEA and others. Answers to questions submitted to the panel during the event will be posted at [www.BeHealthyBeHappyPrinceWilliam.com](http://www.BeHealthyBeHappyPrinceWilliam.com) under Local Reports.

Locally, the community health assessment process identified substance use/abuse and mental health as one of the top public health issues important to the community. The Coalition is holding this public event to address those specific health concerns that local residents identified as a priority in the community.

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*The Community Healthcare Coalition of Greater Prince William (CHCGPW) is a partnership among George Mason University, the Greater Prince William Community Health Center, Kaiser Permanente, Novant UVA Health System, Potomac Health Foundation, Prince William Area Free Clinic, Prince William Health District, and Sentara Healthcare System, with the goal of collectively improving the health of the residents of the jurisdictions served by the participating entities. This community collaboration was established so that through shared resources and collective effort, a Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan would be developed to prioritize community health issues and promote strategies to improve health outcomes. The 2016 Greater Prince William Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan are available at* [*www.BeHealthyBeHappyPrinceWilliam.com*](http://www.BeHealthyBeHappyPrinceWilliam.com) *under Local Reports.*

**NOTE: A flier for the event is attached.**