

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CELEBRATING RECOVERY: THE POWER OF POSITIVE PEER SUPPORT IN ALCOHOL AND DRUG PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Forum to address promising practices for Connecticut youth and their families dealing with substance abuse issues

Teens helping each other stay sober through peer-based support groups is a growing trend in Connecticut. The peer-to-peer support groups, which also exist for families, will be among the key topics discussed as area advocates join together to present an evening of hope and a celebration of sobriety at the Ridgefield Playhouse on Monday, Nov. 10th. at 7 p.m.

The evening will feature two short documentaries which highlight young people and their families finding a path to recovery from alcohol and drug abuse. The films, *Central Pride* and *Vinnie*, were produced and directed by Greg Williams, 25, a native of Newtown, Conn.

"After getting sober at 17, I got to witness hundreds of other young people succeed in recovery from drugs and alcohol and then got to watch them take their personal experience and turn around to offer recovery support to their peers," said Williams. "I was inspired and I knew that if I could tell their stories on video others could see, hear, and feel the power of peer support."

Central Pride tells the story of Central High School of Bridgeport, Conn. and its promising peer-to-peer recovery support model called "The Leadership Group." It started four years ago with just three students and through peer-to-peer outreach now includes more than 300 participating students who help each other live drug and alcohol free. Teachers and students will be attending the event to share stories of transformed lives and how their group has created a positive culture change in the school.

In between film screenings, a panel of professional and community experts in the field of alcohol and drug prevention, treatment and recovery will address issues brought up in the films and answer audience questions. The event is sponsored by Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families (CTYF), Caron Treatment Centers, Insight Counseling, the Ridgefield Prevention Council, the Regional Youth Adult Substance Abuse Program (RYASAP), and the Housatonic Valley Commission Against Substance Abuse (HVCASA).

"The power of peer support in group therapy and support groups in the community literally make the difference between people successfully tolerating the distress they feel in early recovery and giving up," says Liz Jorgensen, CADC and owner

of Insight Counseling in Ridgefield, Conn. “The sense of hope and community that these connections give is, to me, the most essential part of recovery.”

Jorgensen and area advocates came together and decided it was extremely important to share their strides through peer and family support programs because all too often residents may not be aware of them as a resource.

“I didn’t know there were a bunch of kids my age with a problem, I had no idea, I thought you had to be older to have a problem,” remarks Vinnie, 22, of Ansonia, Conn. in Williams’ documentary bearing Vinnie’s name. Now nearly four years sober, Vinnie’s story illustrates the spirit of giving back to other young people seeking sobriety.

In Connecticut, 16,000 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 need treatment for illicit drug use but do not receive it and another 18,000 adolescents do not receive treatment they require for alcohol abuse, according to a CASAC Connecticut Legislative Policy Paper.

The Nov. 10th program is free and open to all. Donations are greatly appreciated and will benefit Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families. For more information, please visit ctyouthandfamilies.org.

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About Insight Counseling

Insight Counseling in Ridgefield, Connecticut provides compassionate and expert care in the areas of addiction and codependency treatment for adolescents, adults and families.

About Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families

Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families (CTYF) is a statewide organization established to strengthen Connecticut's prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for youth and families. Utilizing the power of youth and families with their own stories, CTYF offers programs and services that are natural recovery supports for other youth and families. CTYF has provided a place to turn for information, strength, and help growing youth and family recovery efforts in Connecticut's communities. This year CTYF awarded \$65,000 of funding from DCF and The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment for implementing mini-grants to youth and families in Connecticut that help build peer-to-peer prevention, treatment and recovery capacity. CTYF is especially dedicated to sustaining and replicating peer-based programs like Central High's "Leadership Group," and the films featured in this event produced by youth.

About Caron Treatment Centers

Caron Treatment Centers is a nationally recognized non-profit provider of alcohol and drug addiction treatment. With more than 50 years in the field, Caron offers primary, relapse and extended residential treatment for young adults, adults and adolescents, as well as families affected by the disease of addiction. Caron's programs are gender separate and gender specific. Caron has extensive experience in the treatment of co-occurring psychological/psychiatric disorders within our patient community. Nearly 70 percent of patients at Caron have co-occurring disorders. Caron’s adolescent and young adult continuum of care is smoke-free. Statistics show that a person who is chemically dependent has a better chance at long-term recovery if they stop smoking. Formerly the Caron Foundation, Caron Treatment Centers operates a residential treatment center in Wernersville, in southeastern Pennsylvania; a regional office in Philadelphia; Caron Renaissance, an extended care treatment center in Boca Raton, Florida; and recovery centers in New York City and Bermuda. For more information visit www.caron.org

About Regional Youth Adult Substance Abuse Program (RYASAP)

RYASAP is an urban/suburban youth and community development coalition serving the Greater Bridgeport region, comprised of Bridgeport, Easton/Redding, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull with local and statewide programs in juvenile justice advocacy, young adult leadership, and asset based youth community development training and consultation.

About The Ridgefield Prevention Council

The Ridgefield Prevention Council provides educational programs for parents and children which encourage protective factors that help prevent risky behavior among Ridgefield's youth.

About Housatonic Valley Commission Against Substance Abuse (HVCASA)

The Housatonic Valley Coalition is a public/private partnership of people united in their commitment to prevent or reduce the incidence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse in Midwestern Connecticut. The Coalition's membership is comprised of: Municipal, School, and Law Enforcement Officials, Health Care and Mental Health Professionals, Minority Group, Business, and Legislative Leaders and Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Professionals