



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COAT TEAM EFFORTS REDUCING OPIOID OVERDOSES IN WICOMICO COUNTY

(Wednesday, August 22, 2018) Clarie had almost an entire year in recovery from active addiction on April 11, 2017, when her son found her lying on her mother's floor suffering from an opioid overdose. Clarie was immediately transported by ambulance to Peninsula Regional Medical Center (PRMC), where she found the hope that she needed to get back on the road to recovery.

That hope came from a member of the Wicomico County Community Outreach Addictions Team, also known as COAT. This member of the team sat with her for hours and helped her get into treatment as soon as possible.

Clarie is one of the real-life success stories of the now two-year-old COAT program. COAT was launched by the Wicomico County Health Department in partnership with the Wicomico County State's Attorney's Office, Wicomico County Government, Salisbury City Government, Wicomico County Sheriff's Department and a number of community partners including Peninsula Regional Medical Center. The goal of the joint initiative is to combat overdoses and provide a smooth transition to treatment and recovery services to individuals with an opioid addiction.

Not only has the program been recognized nationally for its design and scope of collaboration, it's also working very well.

At Peninsula Regional's Emergency/Trauma Center in 2016, there were 264 opioid overdoses. PRMC began intense collaboration with COAT in July of that year. In 2017, total opioid overdoses dropped to 192. Through May 2018, the numbers are down even more significantly. Total opioid overdoses treated in the PRMC emergency department the first five months of this year were 58. That compares to 89 opioid overdoses during the same period in 2017.

“The COAT program is truly an asset in helping combat the opioid crisis here in Wicomico County,” said Lori Brewster, Wicomico County Health Officer. “The program is designed to help bridge the gap between active addiction and treatment and break down barriers that may exist for those battling the disease. Our peers have seen similar struggles, and have experienced the difficulties of battling addiction. They are meeting individuals where they are at, in hopes the lives of the individuals they have come in contact with can be improved and not lost.”

The COAT program offers

- 24-hour phone and in-person support from Peer Support Specialists
- Connections to many community and local resources
- Access to treatment
- Support for family and loved ones
- Naloxone Trainings
- Ongoing follow-up
- Education and community outreach

“Not only did COAT respond at the time of my overdose, they kept up with me for several months through phone calls, which really meant so much. It really helped keep me going. I have such a respect for those who have been through hell, and choose to give back,” Clarie said.

Today Clarie has completed treatment, is working a full-time job and has received her high school diploma. Clarie is now enrolled at Wor Wic Community College and begins the Chemical Dependency Counseling Program in September. Her goal is to eventually obtain a job as a peer recovery specialist to help those in need, just as she was helped when she needed it the most. “The COAT team presence at an overdose is a huge resource to help someone get on track to recovery,” she added.

Do you or someone you love struggle with the disease of addiction?

You can reach out to the Community Outreach Addiction Team (COAT) 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling (443) 783-6875.

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