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HUNTERDON COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE AWARDED OPERATION HELPING HAND GRANT

Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns, III, announced that the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office has been awarded a grant from the New Jersey Attorney General's Office for a new Prosecutor's program in Hunterdon called Operation Helping Hand.

This is a new way to combat the heroin and opioid crisis in Hunterdon. Encouraged by similar efforts in other counties Kearns is resolved to fight the Opioid Epidemic on multiple fronts. The strategy involves law enforcement officers arresting users in possession of or purchasing heroin or other narcotics. When the users are brought to the police station for possession of narcotics, recovery specialists will be available to connect them with treatment and recovery services.”

Prosecutor Kearns stated, “I want to thank Attorney General Grewal for making the grant available so we can implement this creative and unique approach to aid in the battle against opioid addiction. We have known for quite some time that we can't arrest our way out of this epidemic. We must combine enforcement, treatment and recovery services, and education. This new tactic allows us to combat this crisis on all fronts while continuing to take illegal narcotics off the street. Without these funds from the grant it is unlikely Law Enforcement in Hunterdon County could embark on this endeavor. Our Departments are simply too small, too underfunded and lack the necessary resources to otherwise move forward in this effort.”

According to the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, a total of 177 users were arrested in similar efforts from June 11 through 15 by law enforcement officers from Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Union counties. Of those 177 people, a total of 148 – or five out of every six users arrested – accepted the offer of treatment or recovery support services. Only 29 rejected the offer of help. There were three additional “walk-ins” who were not arrested, but who were offered and accepted help after they learned of the program. Of the 151 who accepted help, a total of 102 accepted treatment – meaning in-patient detox, or in-patient treatment, intensive outpatient treatment, medically assisted treatment, or a combination thereof – and the other 49 accepted other recovery support services. Union County arrested 100 users, with 81 accepting

help. The four northern counties arrested 77 users, of those users 67 accepted help.

The Hunterdon County Prosecutors Office has teamed up with Prevention Resources to host bi-monthly open house events. The open house's will be held every first Wednesday and Saturday of the month to provide On-Site Substance Use Recovery Coaching Services and opportunities for residents to learn about local resources and harm reduction, including Naloxone trainings. The open house events will be held at the Prevention Resource Recovery Center, 87 Park Ave Flemington, New Jersey, between the hours of 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm. For more information please contact Prevention Resources at (908) 782-3909.

Prosecutor Kearns stated, "This is a tool that will allow us to work together with our community partners and offer those in the throes of an addiction an opportunity to break this deadly cycle." Kearns further stated that "while this new model is aimed to help heroin users get the treatment they so desperately need, it will not diminish our efforts or resolve to arrest and prosecute those who violate our laws particularly those responsible for the distribution of opioids and other illicit substances in our communities. We are determined to maintain the quality of life here in Hunterdon County."

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