White House drug policy office awards $125,000 to local coalition to prevent youth substance use in Gratiot County

Richard Baum, Acting Director of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), announced 719 Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program grants totaling $89 million. This represents the largest-ever number of DFC grantees in a single year since the program’s founding. The grants will provide local community coalitions funding to prevent youth substance use, including prescription drugs, marijuana, tobacco and alcohol. Gratiot County Substance Abuse Coalition from Alma, was one of the grant recipients and will receive $125,000 in DFC grant funds to involve and engage their local community to prevent substance use among youth.

“We’re losing more than 60,000 people per year to drug overdose, but if we can stop young people from starting to use drugs in the first place, we can save lives,” said Richard Baum, Acting Director of National Drug Control Policy. “Our local DFC coalitions are a key part of this effort because they are bringing together parents groups, schools, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, businesses, and others to prevent drug use and improve the health of the community.”

“Our goal is to make Gratiot County a safe and drug-free place for our youth,” said Ty Warczinsky. “Prevention is a powerful tool to counteract drug use in our community, and we will use this funding to help youth in Gratiot County make healthy choices about substance use.”

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the DFC Program. “SAMHSA looks forward to working with its community partners in implementing evidence-based practices to impact the community and help youth,” said Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz, Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use.

Prescription drug abuse prevention is one of the core measures of effectiveness for local DFC coalitions, and coalitions nationwide have led innovative opioid prevention initiatives. DFC’s 2016 National Evaluation End-of-Year Report found that at least 97% of middle school and 93% of high school youth report that they have not illicitly used prescription drugs in the past 30 days in DFC communities. Additionally, perception of risk of illicit prescription drug use was generally high (80–84%). The report also found that perceived risk of illicit use of prescription drugs was very similar to perceived risk of tobacco use (80–83%), and was higher than for both alcohol (69–73%) and marijuana use (53–73%). Finally, the report detailed that peer disapproval of illicit prescription drug use increased significantly for both age groups within all DFC coalitions.