



Holy Family Church, Duxbury, MA Council: 15210

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Duxbury's Holy Family Knights of Columbus Council
Partners with Community, Police and Government
to Help Opioid Victims and End Overdose Abandonment**

June 1, 2018

The **Knights of Columbus** (KofC.org) is a Catholic men's charitable service organization founded in 1881 with members across the U.S. and in 14 other countries. Pope Benedict XVI wrote that we must have "*a heart which sees ... where love is needed and acts accordingly.*" For Knights, this means recognizing where people are in need and responding.

In this spirit, the Duxbury, MA Council identified the need for God's love in responding to the Opioid Crisis. Concern for members of our community and beyond suffering from Opioids led to our Council's prayers and work supporting government and community organizations such as Duxbury Facts and Gosnold Rehabilitation, which work with substance abusers and their families. We also support and salute our dedicated EMS and Police first-responders who work under intense stress while helping overdose victims and substance abusers and encouraging them to submit to treatment.

In our work, we recognized the needless loss of life due to *overdose abandonment*. That occurs when friends flee an overdose victim due to fear of prosecution because they don't know about Massachusetts' drug Good Samaritan law. The law protects them from prosecution for drug use or possession if they get help for a victim. Overdose abandonments occur all the time, but no statistics track them. However, first responders estimate they account for roughly 10% or more of all overdose deaths. Just 10% translates into over 6,000 lives lost annually in the U.S.; and hundreds in Massachusetts alone.

At the invitation of MA Senator Patrick O'Connor, in January our Council testified to a Joint Session of the MA Legislature for better education about the Good Samaritan Law and tracking overdose abandonment incidents to better tackle the problem.

Meanwhile, inspired by and working with parents of overdose abandonment victims, we developed the *Friends Don't Let Friends Die* campaign. It centers on a business-card sized message that fits a wallet, purse or cell phone pocket with a reminder about the Good Samaritan Law and instructions to call 911 and help an overdose victim before help arrives. These are being distributed through Duxbury Police, EMS and Schools and we are working with other communities to provide them the same resources. We are also printing the message on bookmarks, and have been asked to also produce full-page copies and posters.

This effort could not have been launched without invaluable help from Duxbury Facts (DuxburyFacts.org), South Shore Hospital's Youth Health Connection/South Shore Facts (SouthShorehospital.org/yhc-projects), and Duxbury Police, Fire and EMS. We also received enthusiastic help from our Plymouth County Sheriff Joe McDonald and District Attorney Tim Cruz, Signature Healthcare-Brockton Hospital staff and other worthy organizations. The support of Representative Josh Cutler and Senator Patrick O'Connor has been crucial in bringing this to the attention of the State's policy makers and promoting the effort. And thanks to John Guilfoil Public Relations, which is working *pro bono* to professionally enhance the production-value of the card. Backed by this tremendous community collaboration, **we together announce the *Friends Don't Let Friends Die* campaign.**

Through the help of our collaborators in this effort, the reach of local hospital organizations, our legislators and other Knights of Columbus Councils, we hope to save lives by sharing this message across Massachusetts, and eventually to the approximately dozen other States with similar Good Samaritan Laws, and even beyond.

We are in the process of establishing printing capacity to respond to early requests for our materials. In the meantime, requests for the *Friends Don't Let Friends Die* cards and other materials can be directed to Erin Roberts at the Duxbury Police Department ERoberts@DuxburyPolice.org or by calling 781-934-5656, ext. 1132.

In Service to One; In Service to All. Vivat Jesus.