



Phi Theta Kappa, L&C to host opioid crisis summit

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GODFREY – Opioid related deaths are on the rise, with thousands of people from all walks of life dying of overdoses each year.

To open a dialogue on the subject, Lewis and Clark Community College will welcome Chestnut Health Systems to the Godfrey campus to present an expert panel and summit on the opioid crisis Thursday, April 5.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will take place from 2-3 p.m. in The Commons. It is being sponsored by Phi Theta Kappa and the L&C Administration.

Attendees will learn more about how to recognize the signs of opioid abuse and how to cope with the effects, not only for the addicted, but also those close to users.

Expert panelists will include:

- **Daron Copp**, MS, CADC – Director of Youth Substance Use Disorder Treatment
- **Tami Buchwalter**, MA, CADC – Clinician III - Adult Substance Use Disorder Treatment/liaison for the Medication-Assisted Treatment Program at Chestnut Family Health Center
- **Karen Tilashalski**, MEd – Coalition Coordinator – Prevention

“The members of PTK are so excited to sponsor the Opioid Crisis Summit,” said Vanessa Perkinson, an L&C Honors College student and member of PTK. “We strongly believe that it will open the door for a necessary discussion about this growing issue. Participants will be educated about the realities of the opioid epidemic by the expert panelists from Chestnut Health Systems, while individuals who have been impacted by opioid addiction will be given a place to be supported and validated.

“Opioid addiction is a very real problem, but this summit gives the students of L&C a chance to be a part of creating solutions for those struggling with opioid use and those who suffer due to a loved one’s addiction.”

PTK Advisor Elizabeth Grant said a team of student members came to the L&C administration with the idea and Vice President of Academic Affairs Linda Chapman helped connect them with the experts at Chestnut Health Systems.

“They discussed the fact that the crisis was being personally felt by many of our students,” Grant said.

In August 2017, the Illinois Department of Public Health released disturbing statistics showing that overdose deaths involving opioids had increased in the state over the past five years, and that deaths involving synthetic opioids had increased more than any other category.

“The most striking result was the large increase in the number of deaths involving fentanyl, and opioids similar to fentanyl, which lead to a 910 percent increase in synthetic opioid overdose deaths between 2013 and 2016,” IDPH reported.

Chestnut Health Systems Director of Public Affairs Jim Wallis said 87 residents in Madison County alone died of an opioid overdose in 2017.

“In the United States last year, approximately 64,000 individuals died of drug overdoses; 48,000 of those deaths were opioid related,” Wallis said. “We have a health crisis in our own backyard. Knowledge is power, and events like the Lewis and Clark Opioid Summit allow a venue to get that information in the hands of individuals who can make a difference.”

Light snacks will be provided for those in attendance.

For more information, contact Grant at eegrant@lc.edu or (618) 468-4725.