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Greene County Health Department Recognizes 2023 Overdose Awareness Day

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CARROLLTON - Local communities in Greene and Scott and around the world are coming together on August 31, 2023, to remember all those who we have lost or suffered permanent injury due to overdose.

Observed on August 31 every year, International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) seeks to create better understanding of overdose, reduce the stigma of substance-related deaths, and create change that reduces the harms associated with substance use.

The Greene County Health Department's Greene & Scott County Recovery Council project is recognizing this day by making a bold statement. "Residents who visit the square in Winchester this morning or the Greene County Courthouse this afternoon will be met with empty shoes, symbolizing the loss our communities have faced as a result of this crisis" said Recovery Coordinator Amanda Morrow. "It can be challenging to convey just how bad the crisis we face is and even harder for some to relate if you haven't been directly touched by it. By creating a visual, we hope to catch the attention of residents and to raise awareness about the life saving tool, naloxone that is readily available, free of charge at the Health Departments in Winchester and Carrollton as well as our satellite office in Roodhouse.", Morrow said.

By holding an event this year, the people of Greene and Scott are joining themselves in a global movement for understanding, compassion, and change.

Overdose rates have skyrocketed in the last 25 years. In 2020, an estimated 284 million people worldwide had used a drug in the past 12 months, a 26% increase from 2010.

In 2021, data from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention estimated there were 107,622 drug overdose deaths, an increase of 15% from 2020. This same year, overdose became the leading cause of death for those aged 18-49.

The event was planned and developed by members of the recovery community with the Recovery Council providing the tools and support to make it a reality.

"With our event this year, we honor the people whose lives have been altered by overdose. They are the family and friends grieving the loss of a loved one; workers in healthcare and support services extending strength and compassion; or spontaneous first responders, who often are an individual's family, who selflessly assume the role of lifesaver," said Community Health Manager Ron Sprong. Data suggests that since the department began its work to address the crisis in 2022, there has been a significant drop in overdose fatalities in our community, but the departments remain committed to ensuring we end this crisis once and for all. It is crucial that our community recognizes that while we may be seeing some success in reducing the risk of fatal overdose, this doesn't account for the thousands of non-fatal overdoses that occur annually. There is an array of tools, including recognizing the signs and symptoms and having naloxone on hand that can potentially save a life.

Residents who are interested in helping build a strong recovery community are invited to join the Recovery Council's monthly meetings held on the third Tuesday of the month at 3 PM. Meetings are available online and in-person at Greene County Health Department, North Greene Office, located at 205 S. Morse. St, Roodhouse, IL 62082. Visit <https://GreeneCountyHD.org/Recovery> to learn more.

To access lifesaving tools such as naloxone, locate support groups in our community, get access to clinical treatment, or to simply learn more about recognizing the signs and symptoms of overdose, residents can connect with our Community Health Team at (217) 942-6961, Option #6.