Ohio's 2018 Opiate Conference and CARES Awards Luncheon

Columbus, OH – At a statewide conference in Columbus, over 1,100 attendees participated in Ohio's 2018 Opiate Conference: Strengthening Ohio's Communities. Professionals, individuals, and family members impacted by addiction to opiates and other drugs were in attendance to learn from local, state, and national leaders.

Cheri L. Walter, CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities and conference host, introduced the conference by giving her perspective on the growing understanding of addiction in Ohio. She shared that, “This Conference is about hope and about what is working. We all know we have a serious epidemic on our hands. Now we are coming together and finding new and innovative ways to help address this epidemic and finding ways to help individuals move toward recovery. Those of us in this field need to be leaders in fighting the stigma of addiction. We must remind people that addiction is a disease, that treatment does work, and together we must believe in recovery, promote the reality of recovery, and celebrate individuals in recovery.”

During the luncheon, United States Senator Rob Portman, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region V Director Doug O’Brien, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Director Tracy J. Plouck, OACBHA President Elaine Georgas, and OACBHA CEO Cheri L. Walter presented the CARES Awards to four first responders who have been working on the front lines of the opioid epidemic in communities throughout Ohio.

The CARES Awards were presented to first responders who have gone above and beyond in helping individuals, families, and their communities deal with the adverse effects of Ohio's opiate epidemic. Due to their actions lives have been saved, families have been helped, and communities have benefited from their commitment to serving those in need. For the CARES Awards, we worked with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ohio Fire Chiefs’ Association and the Buckeye State Sheriffs’ Association to identify an outstanding member of their organization. The CARES Awards recipients were as follows:

**Assistant Chief Will Mueller**
Selected by the Ohio Fire Chief’s Association - Will Mueller is the Assistant Chief of Colerain Township's Department of Fire and EMS.

Colerain Township’s “Quick Response Team (QRT)” approach to the opiate epidemic, championed by Assistant Chief Mueller, has proven to have a profound impact not only within Colerain's community, but regionally and nationally, as well. Assistant Chief Mueller has led Colerain Township’s Department of Fire and EMS collaboratively assisting people with opioid addictions to obtain access to treatment. He has traveled the United States
presenting to other communities on the subject and the QRT concept. His commitment and dedication to the QRT program has resulted in many jurisdictions and agencies replicating the success of the Colerain Township.

**Trooper Chad Schell**
Selected by the Ohio State Highway Patrol – Chad Shell is a State Highway Patrol Trooper.

Trooper Schell was a graduate of the 153rd Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy class in 2013 and in 2015 was assigned to the Division's Criminal Patrol Unit as a canine handler. Trooper Schell has earned the Division's Criminal Patrol award four times. In 2017, Trooper Schell initiated 72 felony cases and arrested 89 suspects, which resulted in the seizure of 11 pounds of cocaine, 8 pounds of heroin, 739 pills, one pound of methamphetamines, eight firearms and over $285,000 in drug proceeds.

**Deputy Dennis Whaley**
Selected by the Buckeye State Sheriffs’ Association - Dennis Whaley is a Deputy Sheriff in Lucas County.

Deputy Whaley has had various assignments during his years of service in Lucas County including working in the Lucas County Corrections Center, serving as a deputy in the Toledo Municipal Court, and in 2015 he began working for the Lucas County Sheriff's Office Drug Abuse Response Team (DART). Deputy Whaley meets with overdose victims and their families building strong relationships of trust. He transports those with a substance use disorder to effective local treatment centers, provides encouragement, monitors and engages the victims and their families as they progress through their treatment and recovery process.

Deputy Whaley has dealt with addiction in his family and was able to find help in a local support group by attending meetings, which has also developed his passion for those struggling with addiction. He now coordinates and leads parent meetings in a local support group called S.A.F.E. (Supporting Addicts’ Families Everywhere). Deputy Whaley is a positive role model and has made an outstanding contribution to helping victims overcome their addictions.

**Chief Robert Ware**
Selected by the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police – Robert Ware is the Chief of Policy of the Portsmouth Police Department in Scioto County.

Chief Robert Ware was selected as the 59th Chief of Police for the City of Portsmouth in December of 2012. Chief Ware’s police department has developed a targeted enforcement program in cooperation with the probation departments, the fire department, and the health department to combat drug trafficking in the neighborhoods, closing nuisance properties, and remediating abandoned houses that attract illicit behavior. Chief Ware also directed his department to develop mentoring programs in the schools where officers are encouraging children to live drug-free. The Portsmouth PD has coordinated extensively with various social, medical, mental health, and court agencies to develop a means of giving individuals a chance of successful rehabilitation and recovery.

*Ohio’s 2018 Opiate Conference: Strengthening Ohio’s Communities* is a conference hosted by the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, the trade association that represents Ohio’s Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards.
Group Image Attached