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HHS Deputy Secretary Addresses Ohio’s 2018 Opiate Conference

Columbus, OH – Over 1,100 individuals attending the Ohio’s 2018 Opiate Conference: Strengthening Ohio’s Communities heard from United States Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Eric D. Hargan and Admiral James "Sandy" Winnefeld (ret.), the Co-Chair of SAFEProject US.

Admiral James “Sandy” Winnefeld (ret.), the Co-Chair of SAFE (Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic) Project US shared the story of how his family was impacted by the epidemic, how his son struggled with addiction, and ultimately died from an overdose. The SAFE Project US, founded by Admiral Winnefeld (ret.) and his wife, is committed to contributing in a tangible way to overcoming the epidemic of the opioid addiction in the United States. While addressing the crowd, Admiral Winnefeld (ret.) shared, “We need to change our mantra around substance use prevention from Just Say No to Just Say Know.” He later said, “We are going to win this at the community level. All groups come together, break down the attitudes, and understand what we do can work together.”

During his comments, Deputy Secretary Hargan shared information about all of the initiatives underway at the federal level while expressing his appreciation of individuals working in this field stating, “Thank you for what you are doing to raise awareness and heal this country.” Deputy Secretary Hargan also participated in a roundtable discussion with several ADAMH Board Directors and other state leaders discussing Ohio’s response to the opiate epidemic.

Elaine Georgas, Lorain County ADAS Director and President of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, introduced the conference by giving her perspective on the growing understanding of addiction in Ohio. She shared that, “Ohio's Opiate Conference continues to bring together national, state, and local leaders to learn and discuss solutions about the opiate epidemic in cities and towns throughout Ohio. The discussions are about more than getting rid of opiates, they’re about community collaboratives and partnerships. We have done a lot, but there is much more to do and together we can create stronger, more healthy communities for all.”

Ohio’s 2018 Opiate Conference: Strengthening Ohio’s Communities is the ninth annual opiate 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.

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