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Facing Addiction in Harford County: A Candid Conversation with 19th U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy Sept. 14

BEL AIR, Md., (Aug. 28, 2017) - The Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy and the nonprofit Addiction Connections Resource, Inc. will present “Facing Addiction in Harford County: A Conversation with the 19th Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy” on Thursday, September 14 from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. at Bel Air High School in Bel Air, Maryland. Dr. Murthy has been a leading advocate within the healthcare profession for addressing the nation’s opioid epidemic. This free, public event will feature a candid panel discussion on addiction and the heroin epidemic followed by a question and answer session with Dr. Murthy, and state and local leaders. Maryland Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford will provide opening remarks. The panel will include Harford County Executive Barry Glassman; Executive Director of the Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center Clay Stamp; Harford County Public Schools Superintendent Barbara Canavan; Harford County Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler, and Joe Ryan, administrator of the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy.

“I urge everyone to attend this important and potentially lifesaving discussion. We have reached to the highest levels of the medical community to help families understand addiction, to implement best practices in treatment and prevention, and to heal our communities,” Harford County Executive Barry Glassman said. “Dr. Murthy is one of the nation’s most prominent experts on addiction. Together we will explore strategies being used at home and around the country to fight this devastating scourge.”

During his tenure as U.S. surgeon general from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Murthy launched the “TurnTheTideRx” campaign, catalyzing a movement among health professionals to address the national opioid crisis. He also authored a landmark report on opiates, the first publication from a surgeon general on the topic of drug and alcohol addiction. Released in November 2016, the 400-page report titled “[Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health](#),” emphasized that dependency on opioids and other substances must not be viewed as a character flaw. To read the full report visit <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov>.

Upon the report’s release, Dr. Murthy said in a statement, “We will only be successful in addressing addiction — and other illnesses — when we recognize the humanity within each of us. People are more than their disease. All of us are more than our worst mistakes.”

Dr. Murthy was most recently featured in the September 2017 issue of National Geographic. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/09/three-questions-vivek-murthy/>

Students, their parents and caregivers, and all concerned citizens are invited to attend the Sept. 14 presentation. Attendees will learn new information about the increase of synthetic opioids and fentanyl in Harford County, why opioids are so addictive; and local, state and national efforts to fight the opioid epidemic. In addition, families will learn about the signs and symptoms to look for, and where to go for help.

Participation in the program supports local Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy will grant \$250 to any Harford County PTA with 100 people in attendance from their school.

Audience members will have the opportunity to pose questions anonymously to the panelists. Questions may also be emailed in advance to odcp@harfordcountymd.gov.

The Harford County Sheriff’s HOPE Trailer, which includes a mock bedroom to show parents where to look for drugs, will be available for tours beginning at 5:00 p.m. prior to the panel discussion. In addition, the Office of Drug Control Policy will host the Fourth Annual Human Rope to Stop the Dope event outside the school from 5:00 p.m. to 5:55 p.m. During this event, individuals will link arms to form a human “rope” to raise awareness about addiction.

"Addiction Connections Resource is proud to assist in having Dr. Murthy share his experiences and the strategies for what works in preventing, treating, and educating people about substance use disorder. If you're worried about heroin and opioids in Harford County, you and your family should attend this meeting," Linda Williams, Executive Director of Addiction Connections Resource, Inc., said.

To learn more about this event, including PTA incentives, please visit www.harfordcountymd.gov/services/drugcontrol or contact the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy at 410-638-3333. For those who are unable to attend, Harford Cable Network will air the event live on its channels (Comcast channel 21, Armstrong channel 7 & Verizon FiOS channel 31) and on the county website; video will also be available after the event on demand at <https://hcn.viebit.com>.

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