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HC DrugFree Awarded Contract to Provide Substance Abuse Prevention Services

In December 2011, HC DrugFree was awarded a contract to provide substance abuse prevention services on behalf of the Howard County Health Department's Bureau of Substance Abuse Services. By way of this contract, Joan Webb Scornaienchi, Executive Director of HC DrugFree will serve as Howard County's Prevention Coordinator and Maryland Strategic Prevention Framework (MSPF) Coordinator.

Through these roles, HC DrugFree will serve as the liaison for the Howard County Health Department's Bureau of Substance Abuse Services with local businesses, organizations, school system, foundations, and other government entities and will advance Howard County's focus on environmental and community-based approaches to substance abuse prevention.

HC DrugFree, the only nonprofit organization in Howard County exclusively dedicated to keeping youth drug and alcohol free, began as The Eastern Coalition against Substance Abuse, a grassroots coalition in 1995 at Oakland Mills High School. It was composed of high school parents, school staff, and community members.

In 2004, with the generous support of The Horizon Foundation, HC DrugFree became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and in 2011, The Horizon Foundation funded the addition of a Hispanic Outreach Coordinator to the HC DrugFree staff.

"The Board of Directors and I are very pleased because this contract allows HC DrugFree to expand the many free services we provide to the Howard County community while opening the door for our staff to work more closely with the Health Department and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration (ADAA)," said Scornaienchi.

"Our staff has been participating in conferences, meetings, and trainings to review the latest research, learn additional evidence-based practices, and expand partnerships with experts in the prevention field. All of this allows HC DrugFree to have a greater impact when working with Howard County parents, youth and educators," she said.

According to Howard County Health Officer Dr. Peter Beilenson, "Through this contract with HC DrugFree, Howard County can leverage the services and partnerships HC DrugFree has with key community groups." These include formal partnerships with the Howard County Public School System, the Howard County Police Department, the PTA Council of Howard County, the Howard County Library, and the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

In the 2010-11 school year, HC DrugFree provided 15 free educational programs to more than 3,080 participants, and those numbers are expected to increase during the current school year.

Local media agencies provide coverage of HC DrugFree events and run public service announcements throughout the year. Throughout the summer of 2011, HC DrugFree's public service announcements were displayed throughout the Mall in Columbia. Currently, there are active HC DrugFree adult

representatives serving on most high school and middle school parent/teacher organizations and on HC DrugFree committees.

Teens from across the County provide the youth voice by serving on HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council. Howard County high school students can join the council throughout the school year by attending the monthly evening meetings held at the Columbia Teen Center.

Scornaienchi said she looks forward to the opportunities, challenges, and continued growth facing HC DrugFree. Early in her career, Ms. Scornaienchi served as a Drug and Alcohol Prevention Specialist in Pennsylvania. Prior to joining HC DrugFree in 2009, she spent eight years at the Maryland State Department of Education as a grants specialist and education program specialist in the Division of Special Education/Early Intervening Services, and she served as an administrator at colleges and universities for much of her career.

For more information about becoming a Friend of HC DrugFree, upcoming programs, area resources, adult volunteer opportunities, or the Teen Advisory Council, please visit www.hcdrugfree.org or call the HC DrugFree office at 443-325-0040. For more information about the Howard County Health Department, please visit www.hchealth.org or contact the HCHD Office of Public Information at 410-313-6300.