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Substance abuse prevention summit set for Sept. 26-27

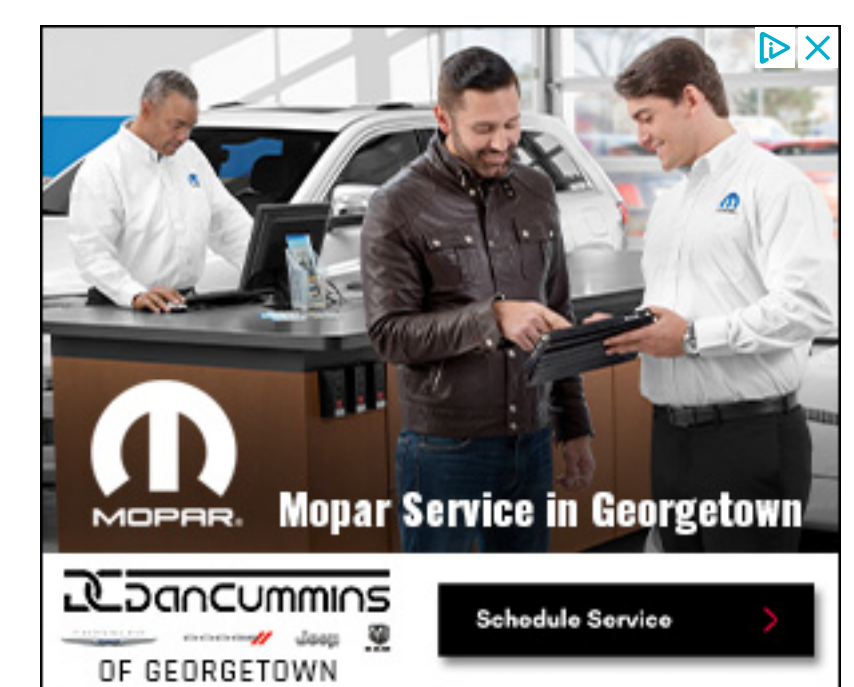
By Chris Easterly Contributing writer Aug 30, 2019 Updated Aug 30, 2019



A community summit focused on preventing youth substance abuse in Franklin County is planned for Sept. 26-27.

Just Say Yes: Solutions for Substance Abuse Prevention will engage people and organizations across the county, including educators, youth service organizations, businesses, coaches, law enforcement, faith groups and artists.

"The opioid problem is so massive and intractable and complex, it's going to take everybody coming to the table with whatever tools they have," said Amelia Berry, executive director of Yes Arts (formerly Hands Healing HeArts), which is coordinating the event along with the Franklin County Health Department and the Franklin County Agency for Substance Abuse Policy (ASAP).



The summit will include two days of workshops with topics such as "Yes to the Arts to Prevent Substance Use and Engage Struggling Youth" and "Yes to School- and Home-Based Strategies to Prevent Substance Use."

"We are thrilled to be part of this partnership and to bring attention to the great potential in Frankfort for linking programs for youth so that drugs are not the easy choice," said ASAP board coordinator Charles Kendall. "The drug issue touches us all in many ways and it will take us all to solve it."

On Thursday, Sept. 26 at 7 p.m., a public event will be held at the Grand Theatre featuring performances by local youth, including The Kings Center's HeartBEATS hip-hop and beat-making program, Kentucky Dance Academy's youth dancers and others.

Psychologist Harvey Milkman will give a keynote address on the "Youth in Iceland" program, a community initiative that has resulted in dramatic reductions in substance use among Icelandic teens. Berry learned about Milkman's work in 2016, so she contacted him.

"We were interested in Iceland and the outcomes they had," Berry said. "They were beyond anything we'd seen anywhere, in terms of prevention."

She hopes to emulate such results in Franklin County with events like the upcoming summit. She acknowledges that Iceland is a different situation, but she believes a similar collaborative approach to the substance abuse problem can be effective here.

"That's one of the things that makes this summit special," Berry said. "That's what made Iceland so successful. It was very much an all-hands-on-deck approach. They involved parents, schools, sports and arts. It is going to take everyone to end this opioid epidemic."

The summit is sponsored by WesBanco and supported through grants from the Kentucky Social Welfare Foundation, the Kentucky Department for Public Health and LexArts.

"These upstream prevention efforts are what public health is really about," said Judy Mattingly, director of the Franklin County Health Department. "We are also grateful to our fiscal court, city commission, Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Schools, Frankfort Independent Schools, South Frankfort Presbyterian and every other individual who has supported this effort."

Among them are Frankfort residents Ed and Corey Councill. Ed's grandson, Corey's son, died of an overdose in 2017. Frankfort artist Doris Thurber, whose daughter, Maya, died of an overdose in 2015, also came onboard with the initiative.

"After Maya's death, Doris really used the arts in her own healing and grieving process," Berry said. At the summit, Thurber will read her poem "Maya Died" as a means to inspire hope and a call to action.

All events are free, but registration is required. To see a full event listing and to register, visit www.yesarts.org. For more information, contact Berry at info@yesarts.org or (502) 395-2711.

Tags: Substance Abuse, Health Care, Substance Dependence, Substance Abuse Treatment, Abuse Prevention Programs, Substance Abuse Prevention, Job Training, Transportation, Healthcare, Education, Career Counsel, Support, Franklin County Health Department, Agency For Substance Abuse Policy, Charles Kendall, Franklin County Agency, City Commission

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