



For Immediate Release

Date: November 21, 2016

To: Barron County Media Outlets

From: Sarah Turner, sarah.turner@co.barron.wi.us, (715) 537-6115

Meth-Moving Barron County Forward

On November 15, 2016 nearly 250 people attended the Barron County Meth Town Hall meeting in Rice Lake. The Barron County Sheriff's Department, Department of Health and Human Services, District Attorney and Honorable Judge Bitney shared information about the destructive impact of meth on the community as a whole and the customers they serve. Also shared were the stories of three community members. They each described the toll that meth played on their lives and that of their family and friends while spreading a message of hope to those caught in meth's grasp.

"I am so impressed by the amount support from the community", states Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald. I was energized and inspired by the conversation that night. Thank you to everyone who came. With your help, we will make a difference. We will beat this."

Since March of 2016, Barron County has hosted seven Meth Town Hall meetings in various communities throughout the County. The goal of each meeting is to educate the community about this drug, bring awareness to the problems it causes, and to work together to identify solutions to strengthen our community.

While the problem may seem daunting, there are many ways to help, says Sarah Turner, Prevention Specialist with the Barron County Community Coalition. "Supporting sober living for those in recovery is essential to their success. Sometimes it can be difficult for those in recovery to move forward in their life, she continues. "Many times those in recovery are unable to find jobs or new places to live and end up going to back to familiar circles where relapses are almost inevitable. So we ask, if you are a landlord, consider renting to a recovering addict, perhaps even at a reduced rate. If you're an employer, consider hiring a recovering addict who is qualified to meet your staffing needs, or help a support a current employee through their recovery process. If you're a recovering alcoholic or addict with long-term sobriety actively involved in AA or other similar recovery programs, consider becoming a sponsor. If you are a concerned citizen, consider becoming a volunteer or a mentor. Invite those in recovery to your book club, garden club or sober sports teams. Help them find sober activities and friends. Most importantly, talk to your kids. Research has shown that teens whose parents talk to them about not using drugs and alcohol are forty two percent less likely to use than those whose parents don't", she concluded.

To continue educating the community and building resiliency against this drug, the Barron County Community Coalition will be co-hosting a Regional Meth Stakeholder's meeting for community leaders, on November 30, 2016 at Turtleback Banquet Center in Rice Lake. This meeting is taking place in partnership with Coalitions from Burnett, Polk, Rusk and Washburn counties. There will be a brief presentation followed by roundtable discussions. This meeting will focus on actions to be taken to help the meth problem in Northwestern Wisconsin. If you are interested in attending this meeting, please contact Jeanine Schultz at jeanine.schultz@co.barron.wi.us or 715-537-5691.

###