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PRESS RELEASE

**DA ANNOUNCES ANNUAL HEROIN
STATISTICS FOR CHESTER COUNTY**

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan released updated information about heroin overdose deaths and heroin use in Chester County.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "Heroin does not discriminate. It is a deadly drug that is abused by young and old, poor and rich, white and black. Nobody is safe. There are students in every high school in Chester County who are using heroin, from Conestoga to Coatesville, from Unionville to Oxford."

Willistown Police Department Chief John Narcise stated, "Even in a safe community like Willistown, heroin is reaching our schools and neighborhoods and is destroying families. We need to be creative in dealing with this problem from education to enforcement. We need to consolidate our resources and search for a long-term solution to this problem. We cannot act like the problem is not coming to Chester County, because it is already here."

The District Attorney's Office and the Chester County Coroner's Office worked together to create an overview of heroin-related deaths in Chester County. See attached chart. This information has never previously been compiled and centralized for Chester County.

For 2013, there were 24 overdose deaths in Chester County where the deceased had heroin in his or her system. There were 14 men and 10 women. The age range was from 21 to 79 years old. The racial breakdown was: 22 Caucasian, 1 African-American, and 1 Latino. Out of 24 deaths, 18 deaths involved both heroin and prescription drugs.

Chester County Coroner Dr. Gordon Eck stated, "We have seen the problems created by heroin and believed it was important to begin to track this information in Chester County. Our hope is that, by working together, the Coroner's Office and the District Attorney's Office can use these statistics to raise public awareness, spot emerging trends, and save lives."

District Attorney Hogan added, "One clear trend from these statistics is that prescription drug abuse is a gateway to a heroin overdose. People start by using prescription drugs like Oxycodone, then switch to heroin because it is cheaper and easier to obtain. We need to stop the initial access to and abuse of prescription drugs."

District Attorney Hogan also relayed information that was gathered by the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area ("HIDTA") strike force, a joint federal and local law enforcement regional program to combat drugs. Hogan is the chair of the HIDTA Intelligence Committee.

As was widely reported, fentanyl-laced heroin caused over 20 overdose deaths in western Pennsylvania. Fentanyl is a powerful opiate, much more potent than heroin alone. HIDTA intelligence now has tracked fentanyl-laced heroin to eastern Pennsylvania, including heroin located in suburban Philadelphia. That heroin was stamped "BAD NEWS." No such fentanyl-laced heroin has been found yet in Chester County.

In addition, HIDTA intelligence addressed the issue of heroin supplied from Philadelphia to users from the surrounding counties. Philadelphia is known as a leading source city for heroin, with very pure and cheap heroin. According to HIDTA current statistics, 80% of non-Philadelphia heroin arrests were for defendants from suburban Philadelphia counties (Bucks – 30%, Delaware – 21%, Montgomery – 20%, and Chester – 9%).

Pam Moules of Chester County lost her 22 year old son Jonathan this year to a heroin overdose during his winter break from Penn State. Mrs. Moules stated, "Our son became addicted to opiates, starting with prescription pain killers and ultimately progressing to heroin. Earlier this year, his addiction took his life. Many people have told us, 'If it can happen in your family, it can happen to any one of our children.' Heroin use is so prevalent in this country and right here in Chester County. It is important to be informed about substance abuse and to be vigilant. It might save your child's life."

Jacki Smiro lost her son RJ, who was 17 years old, to a prescription drug overdose. Ms. Smiro said, "My son was funny and gifted. To us, he was one in a million. But in the year he died, he was 1 in 15,000 people who died from a prescription drug overdose."

District Attorney Hogan stated, "The bad news is that heroin continues to be a problem and that kids are dying. Only two things will happen if you try heroin. Either you will overdose and die immediately, or you will become addicted and die slowly."

"The good news is that Chester County has taken a proactive and multifaceted approach to tackling this problem. We have arrested and will continue to crack down on the dealers. Together with Representative Becky Corbin, we have created a prescription drug drop box program to stop the cycle that begins with prescription drug abuse. Together with Senator Dominic Pileggi, we are pursuing Good Samaritan legislation to encourage users to call 911 if a friend overdoses. Working with a group of healthcare providers, we are helping to start a Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Education ('NOPE') chapter in Chester County. We will keep fighting to protect our children."

NOPE is an organization that works to prevent drug abuse through education, support for families, and advocacy. The NOPE chapter of Chester County is now forming, supported by an initial grant of \$5,000 from the Chester County District Attorney's Office. Anybody who is interested in joining NOPE or finding out more can contact Beth Mingey from Holcomb Behavioral Health System at 484-444-0412.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan