

## **Scioto County Overdose Awareness Event Set for August 31**

On August 31, 2015, the Portsmouth City Health Department will join many other organizations in the U.S. and abroad by hosting an event for International Overdose Awareness Day. International Overdose Awareness Day aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of a drug-related death. It also acknowledges the grief felt by families and friends remembering those who have met with death or permanent injury as a result of drug overdose. Overdose Day spreads the message that the tragedy of overdose death is preventable.

The occasion is also an opportunity to educate policymakers and the public about a variety of proven solutions, such as "911 Good Samaritan" laws and the life-saving opiate overdose reversal medication, naloxone.

Scioto County is, perhaps, the ideal community for commemorating the day. Scioto County has had among the highest fatal overdose rates in the state for over a decade. For many years, Scioto County had the highest rate of distribution and consumption of opioid prescription pain medications, which contributed to high levels of addiction and death.

"You've got to remember, 4 in 5 of people today who start using heroin began their opioid addiction on these prescription opioids. The problem and responsibility doesn't start today with the stereotypical criminal street dealer. We basically created this problem with legally manufactured drugs that were legally prescribed," explains Lisa Roberts RN of the Portsmouth City Health Department. "So the face of misuse and addiction has also changed, since many people become addicted due to a medical event. Senior citizens taking pain medication are also overdosing, as are young people. It's been determined to be a national epidemic," she added.

Scioto County's International Overdose Awareness Day event will be held at the Fastop Market located at 1735 8<sup>th</sup>. St. in Portsmouth on Monday, August 31 from 10AM-3PM. Portsmouth City Health Department will be there distributing naloxone kits, and local treatment providers and applicable social agencies will be set up booths to educate the public and offer services.

At 11:30 the event will feature a special guest speaker, Rebekah Bolser. Rebekah is a nationally recognized youth activist whose passion lies with sustainable development, youth empowerment, and education equity. She's currently a sophomore at Miami University of Ohio, where she's studying the intersection of social justice and strategic communications. Rebekah is the Executive Director of "Seat At the Table", an Ohio based nonprofit focusing on youth empowerment and civic engagement. She has also served as the USA National Chairperson for the International Youth Council and is a LEAD Fellow with the Clinton Global Initiative University. She is also a contributor to numerous national publications.

At noon, the health department encourages all to take part in a commemorative march supporting human life as part of the event. The march will begin at noon at Fastop Market. Participants are encouraged to create and carry signs, and to wear something silver if possible. Wearing silver signifies the loss of someone cherished or demonstrates support to those bearing a burden. Wearing silver sends out a message. That message is that the infinite value of each human being nullifies presumption, prejudice and stigma.

Learn more about International Overdose Awareness Day at: <http://www.overdoseday.com/>