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OVER 1000 YOUTH PROCLAIM "WE ARE THE DRUG-FREE MAJORITY" AT STATEHOUSE RALLY

[COLUMBUS] – More than 1000 young people from around the State converged on the Ohio Statehouse to bring awareness that the majority of young people are alcohol and drug free. The event was coordinated by the Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network (OYLPN), a group of young people who focus on promoting youth behavioral health and living a healthy, substance-free lifestyle.

"Too many times, we see negative stories and negative accounts of teen substance use and abuse," said Marcie Seidel, Executive Director of Drug Free Action Alliance. "This event confirms to everyone that the majority of young people are substance free and that the future of our communities certainly remains in strong, capable and drug-free hands."

The OYLPN welcomed Ryan Smith, a student from Virginia Tech University, to share an evidence-based program called "Actively Caring 4 People" that was created by Virginia Tech faculty and students after the 2007 shootings on their campus that left 32 people dead and 17 injured. The campus shooter was said to have been bullied since elementary school and the program was created to reduce bullying among youth and encourage caring values among young people. The AC4P program was implemented in Chardon Schools after the 2012 shooting at that high school.

During the rally, Tracy Plouck, Director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health, presented the Actively Caring award to students from Chardon High School for their resiliency following the 2012 school shooting. The response of school administration, faculty and students in the year following the shooting is being seen as an example to other communities that have been struggling with tragedy.

"The entire Chardon community should be proud of the way in which it continues to come together, much like a family, to heal and become stronger. This is well-deserved recognition for a community that now serves as a positive example for others across the nation who are coping with tragedy," said Director Plouck.

The Ohio Youth Council of the Ohio Youth Led Prevention Network developed the idea in response to many of their peers' beliefs about substance use and to show other youth that those who do not use drugs or alcohol truly are The Majority. They felt that they needed to bring awareness to other youth across the state that 62% of young people in grades 8-12 do not use alcohol, 79% do not smoke cigarettes and 79% have not misused prescription medications (2011 Youth Risk Behavior Study). They believe that this message will also give other people the courage to remain substance free.

The Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network (OYLPN) consists of youth-led substance abuse prevention providers and youth from across the state who are committed to the cornerstones of youth-led prevention, peer prevention, positive youth development and community service. The OYLPN fosters partnerships and collaborations among these youth-led prevention programs throughout Ohio. The Youth Council of the OYLPN is comprised of 9 youth from all over the state of Ohio representing the 3 largest youth-led prevention groups: PRIDE Youth Programs, Ohio Teen Institute and Youth to Youth international. For more information on the OYLPN, visit www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org/ohio-youth-led-prevention-network.

Funding for the Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network is provided by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS). ODADAS is a Cabinet-level state agency that has been serving Ohio citizens with a comprehensive approach to alcohol and other drug addiction treatment and prevention since its inception in 1989. The Department coordinates a statewide network of publicly-funded prevention, treatment and recovery support services designed to help all Ohioans in need. For more information or help, call 1-800-788-7254 or visit www.odadas.ohio.gov.

Drug Free Action Alliance is a non-profit organization leading the way in promoting healthy lives through the prevention of substance abuse and related problems. Programs and initiatives include Parents Who Host, Lose the Most, Drug Free

24/7, Know!, Ohio Center for Coalition Excellence, SOLACE, the Ohio College Initiative to Reduce High-Risk Drinking, the Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network and Ohio Youth Philanthropy Council. For more information on Drug Free Action Alliance, please visit www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org.

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