

Announcing the Virtual WATM Rally

CONTACT: Nathan Kraatz
Communications Manager
Prevention Action Alliance
Ph: 937.728.9007 (cell)
Em: nkraatz@preventionactionalliance.org



Eric Wandersleben
Director of Media Relations and Outreach
OhioMHAS
Ph: 614.359.6754 (cell)
Em: eric.wandersleben@mha.ohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Virtual We Are The Majority Rally to Raise Awareness of Youth Resiliency, Healthy Choices

COLUMBUS—An annual awareness event that typically brings together 2,000 teenagers to celebrate drug-free lifestyles is going virtual in an effort to support youth resiliency and social distancing.

The We Are The Majority Rally, now in its ninth year, usually draws thousands of middle and high school students from throughout Ohio to the Ohio Statehouse. There, the teens raise awareness about the fact that the majority of young people do not use drugs or alcohol. Due to COVID-19, Prevention Action Alliance will host the event virtually at www.mjstream.tv/watmvr, on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube on Friday, May 15 at 5 p.m.

They'll be joined by the rock band Pray for Sleep, whose members advocate for mental health, and feature pre-recorded musical performances from The Paragon Project, a band from Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center, and Michael Nicholson, hip hop fitness instructor and owner of Phlex Fitness. The event will be emceed by Jade Eilers, Miss Ohio High School America and member of the Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network Youth Council, which organizes the annual event.

"I am so incredibly excited to host this year's rally," said Eilers. "The message of this year's theme—We Believe, We Persist, and We Prevent—has honestly been my prevention mantra. It's so incredible to be able to host this year because of how life changing last year's rally was. Being able to see over 2,000 students, just like me, fighting for the same things as me was amazing. The turnout always gives me hope for the future of my generation."

Organizers say continuing with the virtual event was important for the health and wellness of young people everywhere.

"The heart of the We Are The Majority Rally is celebrating the healthy choices young people make and encouraging them and their peers to continue making healthy choices," said Marcie

Seidel, executive director of Prevention Action Alliance. “Now, as teens face heightened fear, anxiety, stress and isolation, they need to hear this encouragement more than ever. We encourage all young people, even those beyond Ohio, to tune into our Facebook page, Twitter, YouTube, and to www.mjstream.tv/watmvr.”

“The pandemic is worsening mental health issues by increasing or creating isolation, fear, anxiety, and stress,” Seidel said. “Having this rally brings together young people, gives them an online opportunity to socialize with each other and our host using #WATM20, and shares with them coping skills and strategies that they can use to protect themselves and their mental wellbeing.”

The Virtual We Are The Majority Rally is hosted by Prevention Action Alliance through its Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network. It is sponsored by the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services and supported by RecoveryOhio.

“We are thrilled to be a part of the Virtual Rally,” said OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss. “With schools being closed and extracurricular events cancelled amid the coronavirus pandemic, many young people are experiencing sadness, fear and isolation. This rally will connect young people with their peers, spread a message of positivity and serve as a reminder that we’re all in this together.”