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BLADE Coalition Brings Know the Truth™ Program to Brainerd Lakes Area Schools *Substance Use Prevention Programming to Reach 4,000 students & 90,000 Community Members*

The Crow Wing County Brainerd Lakes Area Drug Education (BLADE) Coalition was recently awarded a Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant from the federal government. The grant provides the organization with \$250,000 per year for five years to support youth substance use prevention efforts. BLADE is using the grant to partner with the Minnesota Prevention & Recovery Alliance (MnPRA) to bring their Know the Truth™ Prevention Program to Brainerd Lakes area schools.

“The grant’s focus is on breaking down barriers to prevention education and peer support services in Crow Wing County,” says Talia Broadhead, program coordinator for BLADE as well as the community engagement coordinator for MnPRA. “We believe that a multi-angle approach will have the most success - that is why this partnership with MnPRA was developed to make our communities safer, healthier and drug-free.”

Since MnPRA’s Know the Truth™ program began more than a decade ago, it has seen significant success in helping prevent substance use among Minnesota’s young people. After hearing the presentation, students are two times less likely to try a substance and most students said they would avoid using substances including tobacco or alcohol until the legal age of use. The program utilizes a peer-to-peer format where presenters, often just a few years older than the students, share their personal struggles with substance use. This format allows students to open up and helps Know the Truth™ bridge the gap between the students and the parents, care givers, teachers and community leaders.

“Teachers and administrators often express to us how important the presentations are for their students,” says Sadie Brown, assistant director of MnPRA. “Our format sparks conversation and understanding as students hear stories of lived experience and how little choices made along the way can lead to a struggle with substance use disorder.”

During the 2023-2024 school year, BLADE and Know the Truth™ will work with the Brainerd School District to bring prevention programming to youth in 6th-12th grades. Following the initial program launch, their work will expand to serve the Pequot Lakes and Crosby-Ironton school districts starting in the 2024-2025 school year. The services offered will include classroom presentations, Youth Peer Support Services, and a Youth Action Team.

“We are thrilled to continue expanding our Know the Truth™ program to other regions of the state,” says Elle Braland, student engagement manager at MnPRA. “We are looking forward to seeing the tangible results of our work as we move into the Brainerd Lakes area.”

Since 2006, Know the Truth has educated more than 750,000 Minnesota youth, provided peer recovery support to more than 5,000 students, and educated more than 50,000 professionals

Our Vision: Being Minnesota’s favorite place.

Our Mission: Serve well. Deliver value. Drive results.

Our Values: Be responsible. Treat people right. Build a better future.

and community members. As the program expands into the Brainerd Lakes area, they will educate an estimated 4,000 students and reach over 90,000 community members.

About Minnesota Prevention & Recovery Alliance

Minnesota Prevention & Recovery Alliance (MnPRA) is a statewide recovery community organization formed by individuals in long-term recovery and allies who believe that recovery is possible. We believe that education and early intervention are the best pathways for substance use prevention; and we know that people do recover from substance use and mental health issues to live full and productive lives. We are passionate about ensuring that every community in Minnesota has equal and equitable access to both prevention and recovery resources.

About BLADE

BLADE was created as a collaboration between Law Enforcement, Community Services, Recovery Community, Crow Wing County Schools and the Community as a whole. The 5-pointed star in our logo represents this collaborative. The idea is simple, approach and combat our drug problem in a whole new way, through education.

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