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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ECHO Coalition Graduates from National Coalition Academy

Montpelier, OH – On Tuesday, January 30th, Educating Communities on Healthy Opportunities (ECHO) Coalition of Williams County was one of more than one hundred community coalitions honored during a graduation ceremony at Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America's (CADCA) 33rd National Leadership Forum, held just outside of Washington D.C.

The coalition received a graduation certificate for completing CADCA's National Coalition Academy, a year-long training experience developed to strengthen the capacity of community substance use prevention coalitions. Throughout the training, the ECHO Coalition participated in seminars and developed five products that will be used to provide resources and expand programming in Williams County. New opportunities like this training have become available to the coalition upon receiving the 5-year, \$125,000 per year Drug-Free Communities Grant in 2021. The coalition seeks students from Williams County public schools to work together to plan student events and awareness campaigns. Students in youth-led programs work hard to inform and improve issues that need attention in their school or community. The coalition along with stakeholders holds biannual youth summits, one for 7/8th graders, and one for 9-12th graders to increase their awareness of the harms of substance use and connect them with community resources for young people to see themselves as active community members and citizens. We work with sector representatives to bring education to the community about current conditions and issues surrounding the use of the adolescent brain and body.

Bethany Coutz, ECHO Coalition Program Coordinator, along with Katie Brown, Williams County Health Department Health Education Specialist, attended the graduation ceremony; however, much of the recognition belongs to ECHO Coalition members who attended the National Coalition Academy with coalition staff: Bethany Shirkey of the Four County ADAMhs Board, staff from the

prevention department at Recovery Services of Northwest Ohio, and Michael Wright, Epidemiologist at the Williams County Health Department.

Moving forward, the ECHO Coalition will utilize the knowledge and resources attained through the training program to reinvigorate the coalition. The coalition will focus on engaging parents, teachers, health professionals, business leaders, faith leaders, civic leaders, law enforcement, local government, media, and other concerned adults to change the culture of youth substance use in Williams County. Everyone is welcome to get involved. Meetings are held on the third Friday of each month at the United Way of Williams County's office. Coalition meetings foster relationships among partners to create safer and healthier communities through substance abuse education, awareness, and prevention. The focus of the ECHO Coalition is to prevent youth substance use and promote and advocate for healthy environments and opportunities for all youth to reach their full potential. To learn more, attend a coalition meeting or email Bethany Coutz at bethany.coutz@williamscountyhealth.org.



Pictured: ECHO Coalition Coordinator, Bethany Coutz, standing with the graduating class of the National Coalition Academy at the National Leadership Forum in Washington, DC.



Pictured: (Left to Right) Pat Castillo (National Coalition Institute), Katie Brown (WCHD), General Barrye L. Price (CADCA President/CEO), Bethany Coutz (ECHO Coalition), Helen Hernandez (Office of National Drug Control Policy)

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For more information go to www.williamscountyhealth.org or call 419-485-3141.