



NEWS RELEASE

Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes
Passaic County Prosecutor's Office
401 Grand Street
Paterson, NJ 07505
(973) 881-4800

OPERATION HELPING HAND RESULTS IN 33 ARRESTS; OFFERS TREATMENT FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM OPIOID ADDICTION

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

November 22, 2021

Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes announces the most recent results of "Operation Helping Hand," an innovative law enforcement and public health initiative targeting the opioid crisis in Passaic County.

On Friday, November 19, 2021, members of the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office Narcotics Task Force concluded Operation Helping Hand, consisting of four one-day street operations. A total of thirty-three individuals were arrested. The individuals arrested were residents of Bergen, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean and Passaic Counties in New Jersey and Orange County in New York.

"Operation Helping Hand" demonstrates the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office commitment to combatting the perils of addiction by providing substance abuse treatment as an alternative to immediate incarceration. Each individual arrested during this initiative was privately screened by a peer recovery specialist from the Morris County Center for Addiction Recovery, Education and Success (CARES) in an effort to connect them with treatment and recovery services.

Thirty-one of the individuals arrested as a result of this operation accepted substance abuse treatment. They either made arrangements to begin out-patient treatment at a later date or were transported directly to treatment facilities by a member of law enforcement. Acceptance of treatment is not in lieu of arrest. Rather, this process turns law enforcement encounters into an opportunity for individuals to turn their lives around and help break the cycle of addiction by connecting each individual with vital treatment, recovery and support services.

With the collaborative effort of law enforcement and substance abuse treatment agencies, it is the mission of all those involved that the number of people afflicted with opioid addiction eventually decreases and that those who once suffered from its grasp can lead fruitful, productive, and healthy lives.

Many thanks to the following law enforcement partners who assisted in this operation: Passaic County Sheriff Richard H. Berdnik and the Passaic County Sheriff's Department, Bloomingdale Chief of Police Joseph Borell and the Bloomingdale Police Department, Clifton Chief of Police

Tom Rinaldi and the Clifton Police Department, Haledon Chief of Police Angelo J. Daniele and the Haledon Police Department, Hawthorne Chief of Police James Knepper and the Hawthorne Police Department, Little Falls Chief of Police Steven Post and the Little Falls Police Department, Montclair State University Chief of Police Paul M. Cell and the Montclair State University Police Department, North Haledon Chief of Police Todd Darby and the North Haledon Police Department, Passaic Chief of Police Luis A. Guzman and the Passaic Police Department, Paterson Chief of Police Ibrahim M. Baycora and the Paterson Police Department, Pompton Lakes Chief of Police Derek Clark and the Pompton Lakes Police Department, Prospect Park Chief of Police Ammen Matari and the Prospect Park Police Department, Ringwood Chief of Police Peter McGinty and the Ringwood Police Department, Totowa Chief of Police Carmen Veneziano and the Totowa Police Department, Wanaque Chief of Police Robert Kronyak and the Wanaque Police Department, Wayne Chief of Police Jack McNiff and the Wayne Police Department, West Milford Chief of Police James DeVore and the West Milford Police Department, William Paterson University Director of Public Safety and University Police Charles Lowe and the William Paterson University Police Department, and Woodland Park Chief of Police John Uzzalino and the Woodland Park Police Department.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the support, dedication and commitment from all the peer recovery specialists from Morris CARES who assisted in pairing those seeking treatment with the appropriate programs and facilities.

For media inquiries concerning Operation Helping Hand, contact Senior Assistant Prosecutor In-Charge Allan Nawrocki of the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office at anawrocki@passaiccountynj.org or at (973) 837-7768.