



One Care of Southwest Virginia, Inc.

June 11, 2010

Dear Colleague,

As a thought leader, stakeholder or citizen concerned about the tragic impact of substance abuse on our economy, our children, our families and our wonderful way of life in Southwest Virginia and central Appalachia, we invite you to contribute your best actionable ideas at one of four planned regional strategic planning sessions. Through this inclusive process, we will create our **Blueprint for Substance Abuse and Misuse Prevention, Treatment and Control**. To facilitate your participation and contribution, sessions will be held throughout our region. Whether you live, work, learn and play in Southwest Virginia or in a neighboring region or state, we want your input.

While there are scores of public and private agencies, coalitions, faith based communities, business, recovery communities, elected officials, professionals and others who are engaged in vital work to address a problem that has disproportionately impacted our region, we believe there is a need to further collaborate and continue this good work, strategically leveraging our resources and our commitment. Informed by the ground breaking work of the Southwest Virginia Health Authority's **Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity** we seek to create a Blueprint with shared and measurable goals and objectives that can inform and invigorate our work and spur us to enhance, foster or create opportunities that will dramatically reduce the impact of substance abuse and misuse in our region. Together we can staunch the drain on our region's reputation, physical, economic and mental vitality caused by substance abuse.

The statistics are all too well known. With over 200 drug-overdose deaths each year in Southwest Virginia since 2003, at rates 3, 4 and 5 times higher in Southwest Virginia communities than in our nation or state, we have lost more than 2000 people to this epidemic in this decade. These are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children, and friends. These losses cannot continue. As terrible and tragic as these deaths are, they do not begin to count the number of lives impacted - the children abandoned and displaced, the jails filled to overflowing, the huge public and private expenses and the economic opportunities we have lost to substance abuse. Unfortunately, this problem is rising rapidly in other parts of our state and nation as well. Fortunately, our region is positioned to be among the leaders in addressing it.

One Care of SWVA is a regional consortium of coalitions committed to develop this "**Blueprint**" in an inclusive process. We understand that "if the problem is in the community, the solution is in the community" and we want you, as a key leader, to be a part of our mutual effort toward solutions. Place matters, and here we have a proud history, a rich culture and a beautiful place to live. We must not allow substance abuse to continue to rob us of prosperity, health and happiness.

Please join us on one of the dates below.

Thursday, July 8, 2010 – Russell County Conference Center, Lebanon, VA

Friday, July 9, 2010 – Dalton-Cantrell Hall, Mountain Empire Community College, Big Stone Gap VA

Thursday, July 22, 2010 – Wytheville Meeting Center, Wytheville, VA

Friday, July 23, 2010 – New River Valley Competitiveness Center, Fairlawn, VA

c/o Virginia Economic Bridge, Inc.

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All meetings are 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Registration and networking will begin about half an hour before each meeting. Lunch, refreshments and publication of the Blueprint will be provided through a generous grant from The Verizon Foundation. **To Register for the Summit go to: www.onecare.org.** On the website you will find links to Virginia's County Health Rankings, *The Blueprint for Health and Health-Enabled Prosperity*, and directions to these regional meetings.

This important event is spearheaded and made possible by the agencies and coalitions that make up One Care of SWVA. These include our regions community service boards, departments of health and social services, recovery and faith based communities, businesses, legal and professional communities and other concerned stakeholders. Special assistance and support is provided by the Southwest Virginia Health Authority, Healthy Appalachia Institute, East Tennessee State University and Virginia Economic Bridge.

Sincerely,

Delegate Bud Phillips
Chairman, SWVA Health
Authority

John Dreyzehner
Chairman, One Care of SWVA

Carl Mitchell
Executive Director, One Care of
SWVA and President & CEO,
Virginia Economic Bridge

David Catell-Gordon
Co-Director, Healthy
Appalachia Institute

Marcia Quesenberry
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