

## **Operation Elk County Seeking Participation From Individuals and Families Who Have Lost Loved Ones**

Operation Elk County is seeking to speak directly with individuals and families who have lost a loved one to either incidents involving alcohol, in particular family members who lost a loved one due to an alcohol related motor vehicle crash, or with individuals and families who have lost a loved one to controlled substance use, in particular family members who have lost a loved one due to a drug overdose. The purpose of Operation Elk County reaching out to individuals and families who are survivors is to receive their valuable input and perspective in developing programs that effectively communicate the foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences of individuals engaging in the consumption of alcohol and operating a motor vehicle as well as using controlled substances. Operation Elk County intends to develop two focus groups; one for alcohol related incident survivors and another for controlled substance use survivors to listen, understand and develop effective strategies to prevent individuals from engaging in such behaviors as well as preventing future loss of lives.

Shawn T. McMahon, Elk County District Attorney, acknowledged that individuals who have lost loved ones to alcohol related incidents or drug use experience a loss that is real, unimaginable and perpetual often rendering individuals who have suffered such loss to retreat understandably into silence to cope with their loss. McMahon likewise acknowledged that individuals who have suffered such extraordinary loss may be reluctant to want to engage and discuss their loss and the effect that it has had on them and their family for numerous reasons, including the daily pain they endure from their loss.

Operation Elk County believes that individuals and families who have experienced such extraordinary loss of a loved one are of tremendous value to effectively prevent future loss of lives in Elk County, educating the public, in particular the youth of the consequence of engaging in such behaviors, and providing the opportunity for the loss of a loved one to not be in vain.

District Attorney McMahon stated that individuals and families who may be interested in participating in either focus group may do so by contacting District Attorney McMahon at 814-776-5325

or by email at [smcmahon@countyofelkpa.com](mailto:smcmahon@countyofelkpa.com) or Elk County Sheriff Todd Caltagrone at 814-776-5353 or by email at [tcaltagarone@countyofelkpa.com](mailto:tcaltagarone@countyofelkpa.com). District Attorney McMahon and Sheriff Caltagrone shall respectively initially talk with individuals and families who may have an interest in participating in preventing future loss and educating the public in particular youth. Merely contacting the District Attorney McMahon or Sheriff Caltagrone with your story will not obligate you to participate in any future programs or projects with Operation Elk County.

District Attorney McMahon emphasized that the loss of lives due to alcohol related incidents and overdoses does not discriminate as to demographics of individuals and families but rather affects everyone and that the intent of this outreach by Operation Elk County is to engage those individuals who have experienced such loss first hand and who have and are willing to share their story with the hope of making a positive difference, albeit, through the tragedy they have and continue to endure.

Operation Elk County is a collaboration of the Family Resource Network of Elk County and other stakeholders within Elk County which focuses on addressing specific health and safety issues that directly impact the citizens of Elk County, including controlled substance use, under the premise that we all are at risk as to the affect that any particular health and safety issue may have on all Citizens of Elk County.