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## **HAYC3 & ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATIONS RECEIVE \$75K MENTORING GRANT TO PREVENT YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

BENNINGTON, VT, (12/30/2014) Vermont State Representative Kiah Morris, recently announced the awarding of \$75,000 to Bennington-based coalition Alliance for Community Transformations (ACT) in partnership with the Hoosick Falls-based group HAYC3 in support of efforts to address alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse in the region. Funded through the federal Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program, the two groups will work collaboratively on the development of comprehensive, evidence-based strategies towards strengthening communities in southern Bennington County and preventing first-time alcohol, tobacco and drug use in youth.

“The Alliance for Community Transformations and HAYC3 have long shared a strong collaborative relationship and have maintained a commitment to addressing issues that affect our region together for a number of years. The issues that the Greater Bennington region faces regarding alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse are the same as those in the Greater Hoosick region, with shared challenges and experiences. The awarding of these funds validates our belief that we are all in this together,” says Morris who also serves as the director of ACT.

Now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year of existence, ACT is a community-based, grassroots coalition that addresses a wide-range of public health issues including substance abuse that serves Bennington, North Bennington, Arlington, Shaftsbury, Pownal and Woodford in southern Bennington County. In the past year they have co-presented community forums on opiate addiction in Hoosick Falls and Bennington.

“As an organization, we are passionate about supporting our youth and creating meaningful opportunities for youth to lead and be heard in the building of our communities,” says Morris. In addition to coordination of their Youth Ambassador Program, which promotes peer outreach for area youth, ACT spearheaded efforts to establish a statewide and local Youth Appreciation Day. “Supporting youth strengthens families and enriches our community. By bringing together other sectors to look at ways to prevent substance abuse, we can better develop a clear vision on how to support our youth and make that work sustainable into the future,” Morris says. ACT currently receives funding through the Vermont Department of Health for prevention work and operates through the Bennington County Regional Commission’s Healthy Communities division.

The Drug Free Communities Program provides grants to community coalitions that facilitate citizen participation in local drug prevention efforts. Coalitions are composed of community leaders, parents, youth, teachers, religious and fraternal organizations, healthcare and business professionals, law enforcement, the media, and others working together at the local level. A specific goal of the mentoring relationship is to support ACT in the successful application for a larger \$150,000 grant through the same program, which would be renewable for up to ten years. HAYC3 has received national awards as successful recipients of the DFC Grant

for nearly ten years and are one of only nineteen communities nationwide to receive funding to mentor other community coalitions.

“In the years since HAYC3 first received our award, the Greater Hoosick region has become stronger, more vibrant and is undergoing major revitalization,” says Aelish Nealon, Executive Director of HAYC3. “By focusing on the needs of our community and placing voices and ideas of our youth in the forefront of every decision we make, schools, community leaders, non-profits and organizations are better able to work towards creating a future that supports our youth.”

The funds will support the writing of the aforementioned grant opportunity, facilitation of community-based focus groups, data collection, coordination of efforts between the two coalitions, oversight of a professional evaluator and provide scholarships for two area youth to develop social media and youth outreach strategies in the region.

For more information please call HAYC3 at [518.686.9050](tel:518.686.9050), or visit the website: [www.hayc3.org](http://www.hayc3.org).

**About HAYC3: HAYC3 (Hoosick Armory, Youth Center, and Community Coalition) is a rural revival and community arts organization based in Hoosick Falls, New York. HAYC3’s goal is to restore rural sustainability and drive economic development through art, culture, education, and health. We work toward these goals through being a community incubator, an art center, and a place of opportunity. The HAYC3 Armory is located at 80 Church Street, Hoosick Falls, NY; for more information, please call [518.686.9050](tel:518.686.9050) or visit the website at [hayc3.org](http://hayc3.org).**