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STATE'S ATTORNEY



BOB GESSNER
CORONER

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PRESS RELEASE

CORONER & STATE'S ATTORNEY TEAM UP WITH "HERO" AT UPCOMING FARMERS' MARKETS

KANKAKEE, IL – Kankakee County Coroner Bob Gessner and State's Attorney Jim Rowe have teamed up with the *Heroin Epidemic Relief Organization* to bring the H.E.R.O. Trailer to Kankakee County. The 128 square-foot trailer will debut in Kankakee County **this Saturday, July 1st** at the Kankakee Farmers Market (8am-12pm), and on **Thursday, July 13th** at the Manteno Farmers Market (4pm-7pm). The H.E.R.O. mobile educational program teaches parents to spot signs their teens are using heroin or other illegal substances, with the trailer's model bedroom showing parents dozens of places where a teenager might hide heroin or other dangerous narcotics. The trailer will be open to adults over the age of 18, with the goal of helping parents to identify signs of drug abuse and offering tips on how to obtain help for a child with a drug addiction. HERO representatives will be on hand to present the program.

Coroner Gessner has led the charge on bringing Narcan, a nasal spray that saves the life of a heroin overdose victim, to Kankakee County and training local law enforcement to use Narcan; as a result, dozens of lives have been saved this year. Gessner has also made it a point to train officers in the safe handling of suspected heroin and fentanyl to prevent potentially fatal contact that could put an officer's life in danger. "We have learned many residents of Kankakee County have a personal connection to someone who has lost their life due to a drug overdose. The past several years have proven drugs don't discriminate according to age, sex, race, marital status, education level, or "status" in the community. Children are losing their parents, parents are losing their children and our community as a whole is being ripped apart by the drug epidemic", said Gessner.

State's Attorney Rowe has set a course of aggressively prosecuting drug dealers and investigating overdose deaths with the goal of filing drug-induced homicide charges against the dealers when possible. Nonetheless, Rowe acknowledges that "we cannot prosecute our way out of this crisis – it will take an equal effort aimed at prevention and treatment to stop the rising number of heroin deaths in our county, and we hope that bringing the H.E.R.O. trailer to Kankakee County is a step in that direction." To date, 28 people have died as a result of drug overdoses locally, and that number is expected to rise pending toxicology reports in other ongoing death investigations.

Questions? Contact Coroner Gessner at (815) 802-7190 or State's Attorney Rowe @ (815) 936-5800.

