



For Immediate Release

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## **Yavapai County Completes One Year State Pilot Project to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse**

On June 30th, Yavapai County, under the leadership of MATFORCE, concluded its one-year participation in the state's pilot Prescription Drug Abuse Reduction Project.

In 2012, the Arizona Substance Abuse Partnership selected Yavapai County to be the first test location in part because of the many prevention strategies MATFORCE already had in place addressing this very serious health risk.

Sheila Polk, Yavapai County Attorney and MATFORCE Co-Chair, said, "Many community partners, agencies and volunteers pooled their resources with MATFORCE during this year-long project. I continue to be amazed at the willingness of our community to roll up its sleeves and get to work to solve a problem."

The project focused on three main goals, asking our community to 1) STAY INFORMED learn more about prescription drug abuse and talk to your kids about the dangers; 2) STAY SAFE safeguard medications in your home and safely dispose of unwanted medication; and 3) SAVE LIVES ask your doctor or pharmacist if they are 'signed up to save lives' with the state's prescription monitoring program to help lessen diversion of pills.

Cottonwood City Manager and MATFORCE's other Co-Chair, Doug Bartosh, said, "We are beginning to see the positive results of this project. All indicators show we are lessening the abuse of prescription drugs in our county and thereby saving lives."

One indication of progress is provided by tracking data from the Arizona State Board of Pharmacy. A reduction in the number of pills dispensed is a measure of decrease in abuse and illegal pill resale. One of the greatest sources of abuse in recent years has involved opiate type drugs. In the past year there was a decrease in opiate pills dispensed of 5% for Hydrocodone and 2% for Oxycodone.

Other major accomplishments include:

- Ten permanent prescription drug drop boxes are now installed at law enforcement offices.
- Dump the Drugs events and the take back boxes collected a record 2,900+ pounds of medication in just one year.

- Verde Valley and Yavapai Regional Medical Centers implemented new, stricter policies for emergency department opioid prescriptions.
- Rx360 educational presentations were made to 5,859 youth and 263 adults.
- Prescription drug abuse among youth fell from 24% to 18%, according to the 2012 Arizona Youth Survey
- As of June 30, 231 doctors and 85 pharmacists are signed up to save lives and enrolled in the state's monitoring system.

Merilee Fowler, MATFORCE Executive Director, said, "I would like to thank all of those who helped make this project a success. Those who volunteered their staff and time include Yavapai County Attorney's Office, Probation Department, Health Department and Sheriff's Office; other city or town law enforcement agencies; our regional medical centers; doctors and pharmacists; all area schools; treatment and recovery providers; youth serving organizations; faith-based and civic organizations; businesses; and numerous community volunteers."

Fowler added, "I would especially like to thank representatives of the Arizona Substance Abuse Partnership and the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC), along with Shana Malone, an ACJC Senior Research Analyst, for their invaluable guidance and support. We are honored to have been the first county to implement this now statewide program."

For more information contact MATFORCE at 928-708-0100 or online at [matforce.org](http://matforce.org).

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Photo Caption 1: MATFORCE's prescription drug abuse educational campaign asks our citizens to stay informed, stay safe and save lives.

Photo Caption 2: Results of the state's first pilot Prescription Drug Abuse Reduction Project show a promising downward trend indicating a reduction in excessive pill dispensing practices.