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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SACO BIDDEFORD OPIATE OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

**New Program and New Hire Proves Positive Results in Reducing the Opiate Epidemic**

**BIDDEFORD, ME March 7, 2017** – The Saco Biddeford Opiate Outreach Initiative (SBOOI) is a collaborative of the cities of Biddeford and Saco, Maine, Biddeford and Saco Police Departments, University of New England’s Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition (CHCC) and Southern Maine Healthcare Center (SMHC) to facilitate pathways to community-based treatment, medically assisted treatment, recovery, and support services.

“It’s undoubtedly clear that the national opioid crisis affects us locally. The availability of treatment beds, the cataloging of existing resources and enhanced outreach within our communities are important tools as the cities of Biddeford and Saco assist those individuals and families who are struggling with the pain of substance abuse in their daily lives,” Mayor Casavant stated.

The program is founded on the premise that detoxification occurs behind walls but recovery occurs in the community. The program grant was awarded by the State of Maine Department of Public Safety in October 2016. Biddeford’s Grant Writer, Christine Ohman and Saco Intern, Amanda Methot were instrumental in the acquiring of this grant along with administrative members, Sarah Breul of UNE’s Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition and Curtis Brown of Southern Maine Health Care.

In November 2016, Sergeant Steve Gorton, Biddeford Police Department, and Deputy Chief Corey Huntress, Saco Police Department, got the program up and running quickly and placed partnership agreements with UNE’s Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition and the District Attorney’s Office.

On January 30, 2017, Maegan Lambert-Irish joined both cities as the Saco Biddeford Opiate Outreach Initiative “SBOOI” Coordinator. The primary goal of this position is to improve and expand our two communities’ knowledge of existing providers and improve connection to their services.

The Coordinator and CHCC’s prevention specialists will provide training and support on a community level at regularly scheduled meetings in a neutral setting to provide a wider variety of services and resources for family support. The goal of this two-stage approach is to significantly reduce the number of overdoses, connect users to and participate in treatment services as well as create a community that supports long-term recovery from opioid drug addiction.

To date, Maegan has contacted thirty-five people, seen fifteen, assessed nine, placed five for treatment and recorded five overdoses. “We are very excited that Maegan has chosen to join our team to help and serve our communities” stated Chief Beaupre.

Maegan has an office at both Biddeford and Saco Police Departments and can be reached by phone 207-571-1652 ext. 7190.

"The impacts of the opioid crisis are seen every day and effect all of us in some way. Many of our families, friends and neighbors face the challenges of substance abuse and its consequences. By working together as communities we can better reach out to individuals and families who are struggling to deal with this national epidemic, stated Mayor Michaud."

The goal of this initiative is to achieve success for those struggling and impacted by the opiate epidemic, as well as increasing program awareness with long-term sustainability.

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For additional information contact Jim Bennett, City Manager at phone (207) 284-9313 or by email at [jbennett@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:jbennett@biddefordmaine.org).