

***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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Rising Drug Overdoses Locally and Nationally Cause Alarm

*Dr. Karl Benzio of Lighthouse Network Says Plan for
Overdose Problem Sincere but Spirituality Component Left
Out*

Philadelphia, PA—It's the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about. But in the wake of a **rising number of drug overdose deaths both in the Philadelphia region and nationally**, educators, law enforcement officials, counselors and medical professionals recently came together to address the problem.

In 2009, the latest statistics available, there were 136 drug-related deaths in Bucks County, Pa. Many of those deaths were from prescription painkillers like OxyContin and Vicodin. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 27,000 people died from accidental drug overdoses in 2007. Another Department of Health and Human Services survey on drug use found that the number of prescription painkiller users has more than doubled since 2002—from 360,000 to 754,000 in 2010.

So last month, the Overdose Prevention and Education Advisory Board was created in Bucks County. District Judge Donald Nasshorn, who is chairing the initiative, said the group will take a multifaceted approach to attacking the burgeoning problem of drug overdose deaths. Nasshorn added that the group will work to change legislation, educate students and parents, and provide informational programs to first responders and community groups, from elementary schools to local Rotary Clubs. Valerie Fahie, the overdose prevention coordinator with The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, which serves Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware counties, said some states have enacted laws that grant immunity to those who report a drug overdose via 911.

Dr. Karl Benzio is the founder, executive director and psychiatrist at the **Lighthouse Network**, an addiction and mental health referral program that also provides **The Lighthouse Network Addiction and Counseling Helpline**, a free, 24-hour phone helpline that Care Guides answer to help determine the best avenue of treatment for those who are calling in with a variety of addiction and mental health needs. The addiction expert says these are all sincere ideas, but the organizers are missing one crucial element to recovery.

“The main component they are leaving out is faith and spirituality,” Benzio said. “Bringing God, the Bible, forgiveness, grace, love and the proven way to renew the mind has been left out of the prevention, early intervention and treatment efforts. Insurance companies don’t want to pay for drug services and rehab because we haven’t shown much success attacking substance abuse using the traditional medical model or behavioral modification model.

“We talk about holistic treatment with spirituality being important,” he continued, “but we avoid including the most powerful healing component into the treatment plan—applied faith in GOD.”

Lighthouse Network is a Christian-based addiction and mental health social service agency founded in 2003, guiding struggling people through storms to find peace. **Lighthouse** finds answers for people who have a hard time defining their particular problem and who also have difficulty finding the right answers from other often-confusing sources.

Many discover the **Lighthouse Addiction Helpline** after searching through other options that may not fit, and many are encouraged as **Lighthouse Network** finds life-changing treatment that altogether addresses spirit, mind and body, concerning addiction or psychiatric issues.

Lighthouse Network offers several resources for those struggling with addiction, as well as for their families, including **Stepping Stones**, a free daily devotional for managing life’s storms and equipping readers with healthy decision-making skills. To read the devotionals and sign up for daily emails, visit www.lighthousenetwork.org/content/about-us/daily-devotionals.

For more information on **Lighthouse Network**, visit www.LighthouseNetwork.org or call toll-free 877-562-2565.

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To schedule interviews with **Dr. Karl Benzio** at **Lighthouse Network**, contact Deborah Hamilton at dhamilton@hamiltonstrategies.com, 215-815-7716 or 610-584-1096.

Lighthouse Network is a Christian-based, non-profit organization that offers a mental health and addiction referral program and helpline that strives to equip people and organizations with the

skills necessary to shine God's glory to the world, stand strong on a solid foundation in the storms of their own lives, and provide guidance and safety to others experiencing stormy times, thus impacting their lives, their families and the world.

Dr. Karl Benzio, M.D. is the founder and executive director of **Lighthouse Network**. With a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering, Benzio went on to medical school and then specialized in psychiatry. His experiences include teaching pastors, ministry leaders and students counseling and conflict resolution skills in Uganda and Kenya; leading a behavioral health team into post-Hussein Iraq to equip health care specialists with treatment and assessment skills; and successfully testifying for Pennsylvania House of Representatives opposing legislation for Plan B contraception administration and for President George Bush's Council on Bioethics regarding Right of Conscience. His specialties include Adolescents, Addictions, Decision-Making, Infusing Spirituality into Practical Treatment Modalities, and the Ramifications of Decision-Making on Social Policy.

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