



## State of New Jersey

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## COUNCIL DIRECTOR PROVIDES REMARKS AT ANTI-HEROIN RALLY IN CAMDEN

TRENTON (September 15, 2012) ... GCADA executive director, John Hulick, participated in an anti-heroin rally today at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Camden, one of many simultaneous events taking place nationally. The events aim to bring awareness of the heroin epidemic and to pay respects to the tens of thousands of young people who have been lost to the heroin epidemic in recent years.

Director Hulick provided the following remarks to Rally participants:

"September 1st marked the beginning of Recovery Month which Governor Chris Christie has proclaimed in the State of New Jersey. Now in its 23rd year nationally, Recovery Month highlights individuals who have reclaimed their lives and are now living happy and healthy lives in long-term recovery. The observance also honors prevention, treatment, and recovery service providers who work to help make recovery possible.

In this spirit, I am blessed to be able to say I am a person in long-term recovery from alcoholism for more than twenty-six years and to have been given the opportunity to work professionally for a good part of that time to improve the lives of addicted individuals and their families.

Over the years, I've come to recognize the importance of publicly proclaiming and celebrating recovery in an effort to reduce the debilitating stigma that is associated with addictive illness. I've also recognized the importance of taking moments to pause and reflect, and to remember those that have tragically lost their lives to this devastating disease. In recognition of Recovery Month, I encourage each of you to proclaim, celebrate, pause, reflect and remember in the coming days.

The Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse is proud to play an important role in planning for and coordinating the state's alcoholism and drug abuse services; administering the largest network of anti-drug coalitions in the nation; and, raising public awareness.

In March of this year, the Council established a Task Force on Heroin and other Opiate Use by New Jersey's Youth and Young Adults in order to tackle what has clearly become an epidemic. With three public hearings already held and one more to go, the Task Force has received moving, and at times, heart-wrenching testimony, delivering an emotional wallop and providing invaluable insight into issues such as access to care, education, stigma, recovery and prevention. It has been a humbling and eye-opening experience for all concerned.

Just two days ago, more than 800 New Jerseyans from all over the state came together at the Council's annual summit, the largest crowd ever, to learn and strategize on how we can help our fellow citizens and all communities become healthy and safe.

Heroin and opiate addiction, as well as addiction in general, is a healthcare problem across all communities and all walks of life. We need people to understand that "Addiction is a disease," a treatable disease that people can and do recover from.

Governor Christie certainly has seized the bully pulpit to state addiction is a disease. And, with his now enacted mandatory drug court program, took the lead to ensure we are indeed treating those with this disease and not incarcerating them. The Governor has stated he knows firsthand that addiction strikes at our young and devastates families. He said at the drug court bill signing -- when it comes to parents -- they don't care about the statistics they only want help for their addicted child.

Today we join with organizations from across the country to bring awareness of the heroin epidemic and the death and destruction it is causing nationwide and to pay our respects to the tens of thousands of young people who have been lost to the heroin epidemic in recent years -- many from my own hometown of Hamilton in Mercer County.

It is with a heavy yet hopeful heart that I am here. Let us continue our advocacy and to raise public awareness so that God willing others do not have to suffer the heartbreak of losing a child. Thank you and God's speed."