



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Substance Use Prevention Education Expands in Minnesota Schools**

*Distance learning allows Know the Truth program to partner with additional schools*

MINNEAPOLIS — Know the Truth™ (KTT), the substance use prevention program of Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge, is finding a silver lining in the wide-spread distance learning model. The program has shifted from its standard in-person model to offering its proven prevention presentations in a range of formats from in-person to virtual, including prerecorded presentations that students and parents can watch at their leisure. These virtual options have allowed KTT to partner with even more schools throughout Minnesota, particularly in areas outside of the Twin Cities metro. Additionally, KTT has expanded its services to provide partnering schools peer support groups, guided small group discussions, and a 24/7 anonymous text hotline.

“Each year, our presenters speak at more than 160 high schools and middle schools throughout the state, reaching about 60,000 students,” says Mika Nervick, the prevention program coordinator for the Know the Truth program. “While we’re not able to be in person at every school during the pandemic, our virtual options are allowing us to be more flexible and to better serve our community.”

Now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the Know the Truth program has built strong partnerships with teachers, school administrators, law enforcement officers, and community leaders throughout Minnesota.

“Teachers and administrators are reaching out to schedule presentations, often with just a few days’ notice,” adds Nervick. “We’re hearing that our ability to step up and support teachers has been a huge help for them during this stressful time. Many have also expressed how important the presentations are for their students because our format sparks conversation and understanding. Students learn that no one wakes up wishing to be addicted, and most don’t see it coming. Instead, little choices made along the way could lead to addiction.”

In addition to adding virtual capabilities, this year the Know the Truth program updated its curriculum to address the latest youth substance use trends such as vaping; address common mental health stressors such as isolation and difficulties seeking in-person support; and added more personal stories that make it easy for young people to connect.

Prevention education is proving to be more important than ever during COVID-19. In a survey of youth conducted over the summer, Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge found that 71 percent believe that youth substance use has increased during COVID-19. Additionally, over half of youth reported using or

considering using substances to cope with mental health struggles and 47 percent have used or thought about using a new substance since the start of the pandemic.

**About Know the Truth**

Know the Truth (KTT) is the substance-use prevention program of Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge. KTT works within communities to help prevent teenage substance use by sharing personal stories about the struggles with addiction and by presenting students with information about the dangers of alcohol and drug use. Each year, KTT speaks in more than 160 high schools and middle schools and reaches more than 60,000 students.