



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**DRUG SUMMIT for PARENTS:**  
***AN OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT PILLS AND HEROIN IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY***

**HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?**

Over the past several years, opiate abuse in the United States has increased at an alarming rate and illustrates a growing population's insatiable drug appetite as approximately 95% of the world's opiates are consumed by the United States which comprises about 5% of the world's population. Unfortunately, the St. Mary's County community has experienced a similar trend, as illicit and pharmaceutical based opioids remain the drug of choice for many people in our community who struggle with drug addiction.

To date, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office (SMCSO) determined five deaths in St. Mary's County can be attributed to heroin overdoses and two deaths occurred as the result of a prescription drug overdose. In 2013, St. Mary's county experienced an increase in opiate overdose deaths. The statistics further illustrate the need to work aggressively to prevent, detect, and apprehend individuals involved in the distribution and diversion of opioids.

Law enforcement investigators and members of the medical community who are responsible for investigating opiate drug diversion crimes are often met with significant challenges. Due to the complex structure of most drug distribution networks, dismantling an illicit drug organization is resource and time intensive.

**DRUG USE IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY – THE FACTS**

Although there appears to be an inextricable relationship between the abuse trends of pharmaceutical opiates and heroin, the St. Mary's county Sheriff's Office, through its investigative efforts, has discovered an apparent increase in the prevalence of heroin. For example, year-to-date statistics indicate a more than 6% decrease in pharmaceutical diversion cases and a 58% increase in heroin investigations from 2012 through 2013. Notwithstanding the current trend, the diversion of pharmaceutical opiates and chronic abuse of heroin continue to be a major concern for public safety and health officials who recognize the nexus between drug related crimes and other serious crimes, both which significantly diminish the quality of our communities.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY**

The Sheriff's Office remains committed to fighting opiate abuse in St. Mary's County as members of the Narcotics Unit work to dismantle and disrupt prescription medication and heroin distribution networks. To meet this challenge, the SMCSO will continue to create and maintain partnerships with community organizations like Walden Sierra, Inc., Medstar St. Mary's Hospital, the St. Mary's County Board of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, and the St. Mary's County Department of Aging to promote awareness of this issue while also refining current investigative techniques to remain effective in preventing, detecting, deterring, and apprehending individuals who participate in the diversion and distribution of opiates.

**THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THIS SPECIAL EVENT**

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**FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2014 6:30pm – 8:30pm**

**Hollywood Volunteer Firehouse located on Three Notch Road in Hollywood, Maryland**

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