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# Operation UNITE Initiatives

[www.operationunite.org](http://www.operationunite.org)

## Overview

Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics Investigations, Treatment & Education) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation created in 2003 by U.S. Congressman Harold "Hal" Rogers (KY-5<sup>th</sup>) to provide a regional, community-based anti-drug response to the prescription drug epidemic sweeping across southern and eastern Kentucky.

Serving a 32-county region, UNITE is engaged in numerous education, treatment, and law enforcement initiatives – many with state and federal partners – designed to empower citizen groups and community leaders to no longer accept or tolerate the drug culture. This is achieved through expanding youth-focused anti-drug prevention and education programs, community campaigns about the dangers of drugs, coordinating treatment and outreach programs for those struggling with addiction, providing support to families and friends of substance abusers, and conducting undercover narcotics investigations.

## Initiatives

- More than **100,000 youth** have participated in UNITE-sponsored youth/education activities. This does not include participants in coalition-sponsored youth programs.
- **UNITE Clubs** – School-based anti-drug education/prevention clubs featuring mentoring and community service components. Since 2005, there have been clubs at 282 different schools in 39 counties with 70,867 student members. (For the 2015-16 school year there were 96 clubs in 22 counties with 7,440 student members.)
- **"On The Move!" Prevention Program** – A one-of-a-kind initiative targeting students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. This mobile prevention unit utilizes 5 interactive components related to distracted and impaired driving and provides real-time data collection aligned with the Kentucky Core Curriculum. Launched in the fall of 2013, there have been 14,273 students from 152 schools in 35 counties in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia complete the entire program through September 30, 2016.
- **UNITE Service Corps** – A nationally recognized AmeriCorps initiative with 54 full-time members providing math tutoring and drug abuse prevention education at 53 schools in 16 districts in 13 counties for 2016-17 school year. **During the 2015-16 school year, student test scores increased 30.2% for the 1,573 students receiving math tutoring. In addition, test scores increased 35% among the 3,378 students receiving drug education and healthy decision-making curricula.** Members mentored 6,676 students. More than 25,350 service hours were provided to schools by adult volunteers recruited by Service Corps members.
- **Camp UNITE** – A free week-long leadership/adventure program targeting youth who are at high risk of drug use, whose immediate family has been directly impacted because of substance abuse, or who are financially unable to afford a summer camp experience. Since 2007 there have been 1,930 middle school-aged youth participants. Each camp features approximately 180 youth and adult volunteers working in conjunction with UNITE staff.
- **"I Am UNITE" Scholarship Program** – Using privately-raised funds, the "I Am UNITE" scholarships provide \$1,500 for post-secondary education to youth who have been actively involved in their school's UNITE Club, been a participant or volunteer youth leader at Camp UNITE, or who have been impacted (directly or through their family) by substance abuse. In the last four years, UNITE has awarded 89 scholarships.
- **"Give Me A Reason" Prevention Initiative** – In partnership with Appalachia HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area), parents/caregivers can obtain free saliva-based drug testing kits. This voluntary program is designed to help youth make positive life choices by giving them a reason to resist peer pressure to use drugs. Kits are currently available in 15 Kentucky counties and 15 counties in Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.
- **Shoot Hoops Not Drugs** – A summer drug prevention initiative utilizing basketball skills instruction under the direction of outstanding role model Jeff Sheppard, a University of Kentucky All-American and Final Four MVP. Since 2006 there have been 67 camps attended by 8,860 youth from 58 Kentucky counties and 20 other states. In addition, more than 1,752 parents/caregivers have attended drug education programs during camp.
- **National Archery in the Schools® Program** – With UNITE's assistance, 172 schools in 32 counties have received funding to start or continue NASP, presented in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources.

- **Hooked On Fishing-Not On Drugs®** – More than 9,000 youth have participated in this year-round mentoring program of the Future Fisherman Foundation since 2005 in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources.
- **The First Tee®** – This youth development program builds character, instills life-enhancing values, and promotes healthy choices through the game of golf. A Bell County UNITE Coalition member developed a drug prevention component that has now being used internationally.
- **Community Coalitions** – Volunteer community-based anti-drug coalitions work to implement drug prevention, education and recovery initiatives within their individual counties. More than \$5.1 million in funding has been provided through an “Action Plan” application process requiring approval of the UNITE Board of Directors. These projects are implemented by hundreds of community volunteers throughout the region.
- **Treatment Vouchers** – Financial assistance provided to individuals (youth and adult) for residential substance treatment for a drug addiction. Since 2005, UNITE has provided \$13.2 million in vouchers to enable 4,069 individuals to enter a treatment program through August 2016.
- **Treatment Help Line** – UNITE operates a toll-free Treatment Referral Help Line that connects addicts and their families to treatment and support options. That line receives approximately 1,200 calls per month.
- **Medication Drop Boxes** – There are 42 locations throughout UNITE’s service region for citizens to properly dispose of unwanted or unused prescription and over-the-counter medications. More than 14,207 pounds of drugs have been collected since October 2012, keeping these medications from being diverted or abused.
- **Hope Wall** – This 20-foot wall features about 180 photos with information on individuals who are now in recovery and living sober lives. Serpentine display is set up in courthouses, judicial centers and large events throughout region to raise awareness about recovery.
- **Drug Court Program** – Before UNITE was launched in April 2003, there were only five Drug Court programs serving 10 counties in the Fifth Congressional District. UNITE provided more than \$4.24 million to help create 30 new Drug Courts covering all counties within the District. Currently UNITE supports the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts to meet Drug Court participant needs.
- **Community Education Kits** – Created three self-contained educational kits for use by trained community coalitions to educate youth and adults about drugs:
  - **Addicted: A Dose of Reality** – An education program for parents, caregivers and teachers about current drug of abuse and drug trends
  - **Accidental Dealer** – An education program on the importance of properly storing prescription and over-the-counter medications to prevent diversion or theft.
  - **One-Step Misery: Kentucky Meth Epidemic** – An education program about methamphetamine production and use and its impacts on individuals and the environment.
- **Drug-Free Workplace Training** – UNITE staff has provided free drug-free workplace trainings for employees and staff at nearly two dozen different companies.
- **“Life With A Record” Prevention Program** – Targeted to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and above, this prevention program examines the criminal justice system and how the seemingly harmless acts—many of which are actually crimes—engaged in by youth can impact their futures. Program includes pre- and post-program surveys. This program has been presented to 4,329 students at 19 schools in 12 counties through June 2016.
- **UNITE Law Enforcement** – UNITE employs two detectives assigned to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as Special Agents. These detectives have been involved in some of the largest state and federal cases involving pill-mill operators and drug trafficking organizations. Through June 2016, detectives:
  - Removed nearly \$12.6 million worth of drugs from the street.
  - Arrested nearly 4,500 individuals.
  - Achieved a conviction rate of 97.2%.
- **Drug Tip Line** – Toll-free line to report suspected drug activity. More than 21,672 calls have been received.
- **National Impact** – UNITE has organized five *National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summits* – the largest national collaboration of professionals from local, state and federal agencies; businesses; academia; clinicians; treatment providers; counselors; educators; state and national leaders; and advocates impacted by prescription drug abuse and heroin use.