NACoA Kicks Off Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week 2016

International Awareness Campaign Focuses on Impact of Addiction on Children

Washington, D.C. (PRWEB) February 15, 2016 -- Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week 2016, February 14 – 20, is an international awareness campaign to break the painful silence and offer hope to children and teens who live in homes impacted by alcoholism and drug addiction. This year's campaign theme is "Become the Star in the Life of a Child" because studies have shown that it only takes one caring and supportive adult to change the trajectory of a child's life.

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) estimates that 18.25 million children in the U.S. are impacted by parents with alcohol or drug use disorders. About one in four children under the age of 18 are exposed to a family alcohol problem, in addition to others impacted by parental drug use. These children and teens often live in homes that are stressful, and sometimes frightening. They may experience neglect or abuse. In preschool they have poorer language skills. At home they fear to share their feelings; outside the home they keep the family secrets, ashamed of what happens in their homes and afraid to let others know. In school they are at risk of being distracted, worried, and frequently absent. Throughout life their health risks are greater, both mentally and physically.

The 10-year Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente with a cohort of 17,000 subjects has proven conclusively that childhood trauma, similar to that which causes chronic emotional stress, can cause developmental damage for children and sets the stage for destructive lifetime health and mental health problems. The ACE Study conclusions have supported the concerns that drove the creation of NACoA in 1983 (12 years prior to the Study) and have propelled its work since. The Study has also helped us to understand that resiliency can be fostered in the impacted children by participation in health education and support programs, and even by the involvement of one trustworthy and caring adult in their lives.

"We know having a supportive, meaningful adult in such a child’s life can help them become resilient, in spite of the struggles of the family, and can go on to lead productive lives,” said Sis Wenger, NACoA president and CEO. “It is important for grandparents, clergy, neighbors, educators, pediatricians, friends, and relatives to understand that if they know someone is abusing alcohol or other drugs, it is likely others in the home are being negatively impacted and need help to recover from the pain and confusion addiction in the family has inflicted on them—including the children, beginning at very young ages.

"Children need someone to help them understand it is not their fault and that help is available. And that is why there is an annual awareness campaign to break the silence that traps these children,” said Wenger.

Since 1988, NACoA has designated this special week to celebrate the recovery of the millions of children of alcoholics (of all ages) who have received the support and help they need to overcome the pain and losses suffered in childhood. COA Awareness Week also offers hope to those who are still living with the adverse emotional and physical impact of a parent’s alcohol and drug use.

NACoA's COA Awareness Week 2016 activities will include:
• A social media campaign spotlighting the ways caring, supportive adults can "Become the Star in the Life of a Child"
• "When COAs Grow Up," a live #NacoaChat on Twitter with author Tian Dayton, Ph.D. on Wed. 2/17 at 3
p.m. ET
• Suggested activities, flyers, infographics and other resource materials available on www.nacoa.org

COA Awareness Week is celebrated internationally each year during the week in which Valentine's Day falls. With participation in the USA, UK, Germany, Brazil, Poland, and New Zealand, dozens of COA Awareness Week activities will be held by NACoA's affiliate organizations throughout the world. Local organizations and corporations are also creating their own COA awareness campaigns for their constituencies.

"COA Awareness Week is a gift that keeps on giving," Wenger added. "So long as those who care make sure that the personal support is given, programs get established and are available, and adults learn that keeping the silence when the child does is harmful. Clarity and validation are powerful. When we help to break the silence, we can see these boys and girls move from being children at risk to children of promise."

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics—the Voice for the Children—is the oldest national membership and affiliate non-profit organization committed to eliminating the adverse impact of alcohol and drug use on children and families. For 33 years, NACoA has been raising awareness about the issues facing these children by advocating for policy change, advancing prevention services, and training professionals who work with children. Through its programs and services, NACoA brings hope, health and healing to children in need.
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