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MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Victoria's Voice Foundation Joins forces with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office to Host Forum for Charlotte Parents on Recognizing the Early Signs of Youth Drug Abuse

VITAL SIGNS Parent Forum to be Held May 23 at the Valerie C. Woodard Community Resource Center in Charlotte; Sheriff Garry L. McFadden Among Experts Participating in Forum's Panel Discussion

(Charlotte, NC) – Victoria's Voice Foundation, a nonprofit providing evidence-based drug education and addiction prevention support for families, announced today it has partnered with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office to host a VITAL SIGNS forum for Charlotte parents on recognizing the early signs of potential substance abuse in their children. Set for **Thursday, May 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the Valerie C. Woodard Community Resource Center (3205 Freedom Drive) in Charlotte**, the forum will feature a panel discussion with distinguished experts including Sheriff Garry L. McFadden, followed by an audience Q&A.

The drug epidemic continues to devastate families and communities nationwide, and in the Charlotte area, with Mecklenburg County seeing a 20 percent increase in opioid overdose deaths in 2023.

Established by Jackie and David Siegel after losing their teen daughter, Victoria, to an accidental drug overdose, Victoria's Voice is bringing its free and popular VITAL SIGNS program to families in Charlotte. The initiative equips parents with the tools to identify and address the early signs of drug use in their

children. The introduction to this video-supported series is an in-person forum convening leaders in the substance use disorder (SUD) space.

"We are honored to partner with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office to host this important forum for parents in Charlotte – and to offer the program to local families," said Victoria's Voice co-founders Jackie and David Siegel. "We missed the signs of Victoria's struggles with drugs. While we cannot change Victoria's story, we are committed to making sure other parents do not have to endure this pain."

"We cannot let Victoria's Voice be the only voice," said Mecklenburg County Sheriff, Garry L. McFadden. "As law enforcement, we must be the voices in our community to continue to hear our own children's voices. It is our duty to not only address the immediate crisis, but also combat the root causes of addiction."

The panel discussion will feature:

- **Sheriff Garry L. McFadden**, Mecklenburg County
- **Dr. Jill Payne**, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Associate Superintendent of Student Services
- **Council Woman Tiawana Brown**, City of Charlotte (District 3)
- **Robert Nesbit**, Chief of Staff for Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services
- **Debbie Dalton**, parent and advocate who lost her son to a drug overdose.
- **Erin Perna**, parent, overdose survivor, and Peer Support Specialist for Promise Resource Network
- **Wanda Wiggins**, Community Outreach Specialist for the DEA
- Moderator: **Michael DeLeon**, Victoria's Voice Director of Youth Outreach and School Programs

The forum will also provide information and resources regarding Victoria's Voice's Get. Give. Save, a national initiative to ensure every home, place of worship, business and public venue carries naloxone, a lifesaving antidote to an opioid overdose.

The forum is free and open to the public. Seating is limited and registration is required. Scan QR code to register.

Doors will open at 6 p.m., and the program will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m.

For more information about the forum and Victoria's Voice, visit www.victoriasvoice.org.

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About Victoria's Voice Foundation

Victoria's Voice Foundation (VVF) was established in 2019 by Jackie and David Siegel after losing their 18-year-old daughter to an accidental drug overdose. VVF is dedicated to providing evidence-based drug education and addiction prevention support to meet the needs of communities and at-risk families. Since its founding, VVF has positively impacted more than one million parents and children through its national platform that includes *Vital Signs*, a program that helps parents recognize the early signs of drug use in their kids and *Get.Give.Save*, a campaign for broader awareness of opioid overdose reversal medications. For more information about Victoria's Voice, visit www.victoriasvoice.org and @victoriasvoicefoundation.