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Harford County Executive

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Shine the Light Overdose Awareness Vigil to be held November 22

BEL AIR, Md., (Nov. 13, 2025) - Harford County's Annual Shine the Light Overdose Awareness Vigil will be held on Saturday, November 22 at 7 p.m. at Mt. Zion Church, 1643 Churchville Road in Bel Air.

This FREE event will honor the lives lost to overdose, celebrate the strength of individuals in recovery and shine a spotlight on those making a meaningful impact through the *Heroes of Hope: Addiction Response Recognition Award*.

Hosted in partnership with Achieve Behavioral Health, the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy, and Grief Recovery After a Substance Use Passing (G.R.A.S.P) the vigil will bring residents, advocates, first responders, and families together in an effort to further the collective effort to address substance use, support recovery, and break the stigma surrounding addiction.

Attendees will take part in a candlelight vigil to remember those who have tragically lost their lives to overdose. The ceremony will feature personal stories, moments of silence, and opportunities for community members to honor loved ones.

"Shine the Light is about bringing people together to support one another and to celebrate recovery," County Executive Bob Cassilly said. "By standing together, we recognize our shared losses while also reaffirming our commitment to hope and healing."

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the inaugural *Heroes of Hope: Addiction Response Recognition Award*, which honors first responders who demonstrate exceptional dedication, compassion, and innovation in addressing substance use and promoting recovery.

This year's honoree is Richard "Chip" Carter initially retired as a Sergeant with the Bel Air Police Department in 2011, with 38 years of dedicated service. During his career he was well known for his compassionate service while helping those with substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders. Chip has been instrumental in the implementation of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program which is now implemented by all Harford County municipalities.

In a recent department award issued by the Town of Bel Air Commissioners, the following remarks were noted:

"Chip has positively impacted countless individuals, guiding them toward better choices and improved lives. He has provided vital support to people facing homelessness and those struggling with mental health issues. Even after his workday ends, Chip remains committed, responding to calls for help and extending his support. He connects those in need with the LEAD program and other valuable resources."

Community members are encouraged to submit photos of loved ones to prunge9@gmail.com. Mt. Zion Church offers support groups for those in need; visit <https://mzprays.churchcenter.com/groups>.

For more information about prevention initiatives of the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy, contact odcp@harfordcountymd.gov.

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