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For Immediate Release

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“Keokuk County to Benefit from Enhanced Services due to New Grant”

Keokuk County, as the result of a new grant initiative, will be able to expand and enhance services and programming for secondary students, grade 6 to 12, as well as for the community. This three-year grant includes all four school districts—Keota, Pekin, Sigourney and Tri-County Schools—working collaboratively.

The grant, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, is for a period of three years, and is part of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program’s Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse.

The grant entitled “Keokuk County Schools Tactics for Alcohol Abuse Reduction,” or KC STAAR for short, provides the county and school districts an opportunity to explore avenues to reduce alcohol abuse amongst our youth. The county should be particularly proud. From a pool of hundreds of rural community school districts nationally, the proposal for the K.C. STAAR program was one of a 76 projects nationwide to be funded.

The K.C. STAAR program will incorporate three school-based components—Project Northland, Reconnecting Youth, and Decision Education.

“Project Northland,” implemented within all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes in the county, intends to reduce substance abuse and delay students from starting to use in the first place.

Reconnecting Youth focuses on high school students and uses a partnership model involving peers, school personnel, and parents to deliver interventions to address decreased drug and alcohol involvement, increased school performance, and decreased emotional distress. This is a semester-long class at each school and students are eligible to receive an elective credit.

The third component includes the use of a model through the Decision Education Foundation. Its approach enables students to judge the quality of a decision as it is being made to be better equipped to make good and healthy decisions more regularly.

New staff, Lynne Zoulek, was hired under the grant funding, began her duties as Project Director in August. Her office is anchored within the Sigourney Junior Senior High. She will work under the direction of an action team, consisting of school representatives, parents, evaluators, and youth from the county.

The K.C. STAAR action team is looking forward to working with the students, parents, and community of Keokuk County, and hope to have a positive impact with the students in the school setting, and assist the entire community with addressing the issue of underage drinking, through development of strategies to sustain resources and services through this grant.