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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Carteret County Leaders Honored for Fentanyl Crisis Response at Community Forum

CARTERET COUNTY, N.C. (April 14, 2025) – More than 50 community members packed the Beaufort Train Depot on Saturday for a public forum addressing the impact of fentanyl in Carteret County. Families who have lost loved ones to the opioid crisis shared their stories, while local leaders were recognized for their efforts to combat fentanyl trafficking and support victims.

The event, organized by the Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina, highlighted the dangers of illicit fentanyl—often hidden in counterfeit prescription pills such as Adderall, Xanax, and Oxycontin.

“Many victims had no idea they were taking a lethal substance,” said Barbara Walsh, executive director of the Fentanyl Victims Network of NC. “The only safe source for prescription medication is a licensed pharmacy.”

The Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina reports that fentanyl, a highly addictive synthetic opioid, has claimed 168 lives in Carteret County between 2013 and 2023 and nearly 19,000 statewide over the past decade. In response, Carteret County has emerged as a leader in the state, notably in pursuing death by distribution charges, alongside investigation and victim support.

Sheriff Asa Buck, District Attorney Scott Thomas, Assistant District Attorney Dave Spence, and Legal Assistant Michelle Gillikin, all from Prosecutorial District 4, were honored with the Save Lives Together Award for their collaborative work in holding traffickers accountable.

“Our team treats every fentanyl-related death as a potential homicide,” said Sheriff Buck. “We are committed to pursuing justice for victims and their families.”

District Attorney Scott Thomas emphasized the importance of a coordinated approach: “Prosecuting these cases requires diligence, expertise, and compassion. We will continue to work alongside law enforcement and health officials to protect our community.”

Brooke Barnhill, manager of the County’s [Post Overdose Response Team \(PORT\)](#), demonstrated how to use Narcan (naloxone) and outlined local recovery resources. Meanwhile, First Responder Therapy Dogs of Eastern North Carolina comforted grieving families.

Carteret County’s victim-centered approach sets a statewide standard, Walsh noted. “Here, families are treated with dignity—that’s not always the case elsewhere.”

Affected families seeking support and resources can find information at www.fentvic.org. For further questions or to connect with local support networks, please contact Barbara Walsh directly at barb@fentvic.org.

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