

USU Extension Opioid Prevention Program Receives Awards

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The Utah State University Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, & Teaching (HEART) Initiative has received multiple regional and national awards for its innovative approach to addressing the opioid epidemic.

The HEART Initiative is a pilot initiative through USU Extension that began in July 2018 in response to health and wellness needs. This 4-year program brings unique academic resources into the community, partnering locally and nationally to address the opioid epidemic and other pressing public health issues.

From 2013 through 2015, Utah's opioid overdoses outpaced deaths from firearms, falls and motor vehicle accidents. During the last several years, health agencies and local coalitions have worked to combat this epidemic through addressing opioid prescribing habits, educating the public about their addictive properties and improving access to services to those who have a substance use disorder. USU Extension is addressing these issues at the state level and in some of the hardest hit counties in the state through the HEART Initiative.

The HEART Initiative received the Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) Western Distinguished Team Award on a national level, as well as the ESP IOTA (Utah) Chapter Distinguished Team Award. The program also received the Innovative Program Team Award and the Marketing/Public Relations Team award from the Utah Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences.

"Our multidisciplinary team of faculty are all from different backgrounds and training modalities, which really sets the team apart and allows us to be successful in making significant impacts in many domains of health and wellness," said Ashley Yaughner, HEART coordinator and team lead. "The team has done amazing work these past two years, and we are excited to continue to serve our communities and state. We are proud to be saving lives and of our collaborative efforts across the state to bring additional programming, funding and support to our communities."

The HEART team will be honored for their accomplishments in community education and harm reduction during the virtual 2020 Epsilon Sigma Phi National Conference in October.

To learn more about the HEART Initiative and to find a faculty member near you, visit <https://extension.usu.edu/heart>.

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