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Frederick County Health Department

News Release

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“FACING OUR FEELINGS” ART EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS HEALING POWER OF ART FOR LOCAL YOUTH

FREDERICK, MD – The Thirteenth Annual Kids Like Us Art Exhibit, “Facing Our Feelings”, will be on display October 3, 2016 through May 1, 2017 in the Auditorium of the Frederick County Health Department. The public is invited to attend a reception from 3:30 to 5:30pm on October 3rd to showcase the art created by local children.

The art in the exhibit was created through Kids Like Us, a program of the Frederick County Health Department, in collaboration with local schools. Kids Like Us has helped local youth in grades 4 through 12 understand and cope with the substance abuse or addiction of a close family member since 1988. Kids Like Us is a free, and primarily, school-based program. Selected students participate in a series of small confidential group sessions led by a Kids Like Us counselor and their school counselor. Participants may also choose to attend the Kids Like Us

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Summer Art Adventure Camp, where art expression is a focus. The campers select the art work from camp that they wish to show in the annual exhibit.

“Facing Our Feelings is a brave demonstration of the complexity of emotions that influence the artists’ lives. Several works in the exhibit are created on masks, one which is titled, “*Hidden in Plain Sight*”. Other art forms displayed include “*Mirror of Feelings*” and “*Garden of Hope*”. The art show reinforces the ideas of hope, resiliency, and the benefit of community support during recovery”, states Cathy Caldwell, Kids Like Us Counselor. Due to confidentiality, the names of the artists are not displayed with the art work.

“Growing up amidst family substance abuse or addiction often comes with unique challenges in school”, states Julie Wood Merchant, founder and director of Kids Like Us and a Licensed, Registered, and Board Certified Art Therapist. “Kids Like Us offers support to youth in positive ways and aims to de-stigmatize substance abuse by helping students understand that their loved one’s addiction is an illness, that family substance abuse is not their fault, and that they are not alone”, continues Ms. Wood Merchant. In the words of a former participant, Kids Like Us “. . . wants us to grow up well and to succeed in life”.

For more information about the art exhibit or the *Kids Like Us* program, contact Julie Wood-Merchant at 301-600-3281. For information about substance abuse recovery services in Frederick County, contact the Frederick County Health Department, Behavioral Health Services Division at 301-600-1755, or visit www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/BHS.

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