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**August 2, 2023**  
**For Immediate Release**

### **Equipping Young Leaders**

*Local Students Attend National Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Conference*

Through their volunteering with SAFE in Northern Michigan and RISE: Otsego Substance Free Coalition, 12 area students were able to attend the [2023 Mid-Year Training Institute](#) for the Community-Based, Advocacy-Focused, Data-Driven, Coalition-Building, Association ([CADCA](#)). While in Dallas, Texas for six days in late July, the students participated in sessions that included substance-use prevention strategies, insights to help build their leadership skills, and training in how community coalitions work.

CADCA is a nonprofit adult and youth coalition that works to make communities safe, healthy, and drug-free. It brings together sectors of the community—schools, businesses, parents and youth, law enforcement, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations and many more. The model for community change represents a comprehensive, evidenced-based approach to reduce underage and binge drinking, underage tobacco use, illicit drug use, and the misuse of medicines.

The conference involved a welcome reception, training sessions, youth meetups, and a community service project. Just a few of The Youth Leadership Breakout Track addressed topics such as Selfcare-Focus on Strengths and Strategies, LEAD: An Immersive Youth Leadership Experience, Ignite Your Influence: How to Engage and Influence Your Peers in Prevention, Keeping My Bounce High, The Power of YOUth, and Hot Take: A Toxic Combo of Social Media, Drugs, Human Trafficking, and Mental Health.

“As adult mentors with SAFE and RISE, we know these conferences help our youth grow in their leadership skills and to better understand the fundamentals of coalition work,” says Susan Pulaski, Project Director for SAFE in Northern Michigan and HDNW Community Health Supervisor. “We are thankful to have grant funding to take these youth to conferences. Each time a conference approaches, the youth put in the effort it takes to apply for an opportunity to go.”

In addition to getting the high-level training, the youth expanded their horizons as travelers and advocates for substance-free living. Some of them boarded a plane for the first time in Grand Rapids as they departed. Upon their return, their news skills are shared with other coalition youth and presentations are being scheduled at their schools and in their communities. SAFE and RISE are open to students from Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.

With results as the focus, coalition members from 12 regional sectors, from HDNW to state and local law enforcement, to area schools, foundations, and agencies and nonprofits such as Harbor Hall, Char-Em Intermediate School District, BASES, McLaren Northern Michigan, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Northern Michigan Regional Entity, BASES, Up North Prevention, and Gaylord E-Free Church, to name a few.

*HDNW is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.*



Proud member of the [Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance](#): 7 local health departments advocating for public health.

To learn more about the youth-led, adult-guide groups, go to <https://safeinnm.com> and <https://www.riseotsego.com>.

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Cutline:

SAFE and RISE youth gather with Health Department of Northwest Michigan staff at the CADCA conference in Dallas, Texas recently. While there, the local students attended sessions on leadership and community coalitions.