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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LRGHealthcare & Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force Celebrate 5 Years of Collaboration**

**Franklin-** A partnership between LRGHealthcare and the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force was recently celebrated for five years of collaboration on drug and alcohol prevention efforts in the Franklin community.

In 2009, Franklin Mayor Ken Merrifield brought together a group of stakeholders and citizens in Franklin to focus attention on a growing problem, drug and alcohol abuse. It had been recently publicized that more NH citizens were dying of drug overdoses than automobile accidents (*a typically staggering statistic*). This was the call to action, and LRGHealthcare volunteered to share in the work of a community wide prevention effort that has become known as the Franklin Mayor's Drug Task Force.

This community coalition is comprised of volunteers from all sectors of the community from business to schools, faith based organizations, fraternal and civic groups, healthcare, and more and they are focused on building a strong coalition and reducing substance misuse. A federal Drug Free Communities (DFC) Grant was acquired in 2010 to help support the work of the new coalition and benefitted the community for five years. Recently, the coalition applied for a second DFC grant to hopefully be awarded to support another five years of work.

Grant funds aside, organizations such as LRGHealthcare are stepping up to support this community effort. Melissa Lee, Community Health Educator with LRGHealthcare has served as Chairperson for the Task Force since its inception and supports the coalition with leadership, education and outreach, and implementation of community prevention strategies. Dr. Paul Racicot, an Emergency Department Physician with LRGHealthcare, has also been an important link to learning about trends in the local emergency scene as well as a regional expert who has brought education to the coalition and community on substance misuse and treatment. These examples are just a sampling of the many collaborative efforts between the two organizations helping to prevent substance misuse in the Three Rivers community.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at Franklin Regional Hospital at 934-2060 ext. 8369, or visit [www.franklinnh.org](http://www.franklinnh.org) and click on "Drug Task Force".

*LRGHealthcare is a not-for-profit healthcare charitable trust representing Lakes Region General Hospital, Franklin Regional Hospital, and affiliated medical providers. LRGHealthcare's mission is to provide quality, compassionate care and to strengthen the well-being of our community.*

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