

ANNOUNCEMENT TO BENEFIT PIKE YMCA PILOT PROGRAM

PHOTO/VIDEO from facebook Link

Pfizer donation to help Appalachian programs aimed at youth trauma

By **Jim Siegel**
The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Jan 10, 2019 at 5:41 PM Updated at 6:44 AM

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer has donated \$500,000 toward efforts to deal with teen trauma induced by poverty and addiction in Pike County and other Appalachian areas, Gov. John Kasich announced Thursday in likely his final policy-related press conference as governor.

Kasich announced this past spring that his administration would assist in starting a pilot program to help at-risk teens in Pike County. He was moved to act after meeting with more than a dozen teens from the area who told them of their deep struggles with parents who were poor, addicted and incarcerated.

Kasich remembered a young woman at the end of the table who started to cry at the end of the meeting. “When she came here, she thought maybe some miracle can occur. When the reality hit that she’s got to go back home, she started to cry. It was really troubling and emotional.”

The Kasich administration and local groups developed the Hurt to Hope program, giving youths the ability to go the Pike County YMCA to get refuge from their circumstances, while participating in swimming, art, and exercise programs. Volunteers drive youths to and from the facility.

Stop article here.....DIRECT TO DISPATCH

“I told them at the time that we couldn’t carry it, because this is a problem that exists in many places and we don’t have the money to do that,” Kasich said. “We shouldn’t carry it. The community should own this problem. They have to realize these young people are precious and need to be protected and given the opportunity to be successful.”

Bridget Harrison, a Kasich assistant policy director for health and human services, was involved with helping the administration get the pilot program going, said local church leaders, law enforcement and local mental health boards have been meeting to discuss the need to find a safe place for children to go. The program, she said, is being replicated in Jackson and Scioto counties.

The program started with a dozen youths, and now has more than 75.

“It’s a movement from the bottom up,” Kasich said. “It’s growing and it gives people hope.”

The last state capital budget included \$20 million for community centers and youth program facilities in low-income areas.

The Pfizer donation went to the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, where Cara Dingus Brook, foundation president, said too many youths in southern and southeastern Ohio are dealing with traumatic situations, but the area has suffered from a lack of philanthropic capital.

“What really, I think, is changing, is the building of local institutions like our foundation where community leaders are coming together, taking the success that they’ve had and are reinvesting,” she said. “It’s going to take some time, but that local ownership is significant.”

The \$500,000 from Pfizer, Dingus Brook said, will address three areas — building capacity at organizations like the Pike County YMCA, help form youth-led drug prevention campaigns, and help train educators on recognizing and dealing with trauma among students.

“It’s really well aligned to attack it from multiple directions, which we have to do in this instance,” Dingus Brook said, stressing the importance of the Pfizer donation. “We had started this work but we didn’t know how we were going to fund it. It’s the adage of have a good plan and money will follow.”