



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SMART Recovery to Use New Funds to Decrease Holiday Isolation New Initiative Seeks Better Season for All Ohioans**

Mentor, OH, November 23, 2020—Like in Dickens' classic *A Tale of Two Cities*, this holiday season in Ohio has the potential to be both the best & worst of times. Even during this COVID pandemic, many Ohio families will enjoy small gatherings and loving times to celebrate togetherness. For other Ohioans, especially those struggling with addictions and mental health concerns, isolation, anxiety, and despair will dominate the coming days.

Now, thanks to a grant from the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), Mentor-based SMART Recovery is launching the initiative *Holiday Outreach Helping Others* (HoHo), an array of online support and resources to combat isolation and the accompanying addiction and mental health challenges.

OhioMHAS, using Federal Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) funding, is looking for SMART Recovery to take a leadership role in providing free online recovery support meetings, a chat room, numerous message board forums, support videos, links to OhioMHAS resources, and more. Additionally, the CARES funding also allows SMART to offer no-cost training to addiction professionals who can then offer their clients the practical tools and self-empowering techniques to stay on track.

All these resources and links can be found at the HoHo website: [www.HoHo-Ohio.org](http://www.HoHo-Ohio.org) As SMART's Executive Director Mark Ruth points out:

*The holidays are typically a time that challenges those battling addictions in a normal year. There are powerful temptations to overindulge, emotional stressors due to family reunions, loneliness for those without strong family or social connections, opportunities to overspend, and even boredom due to being off of a regular routine that can create the urge to overuse substances or increase negative behaviors. When you add COVID to that mix, it can create tremendous problems for individuals and families creating social isolation and lack of access to their traditional support resources.*

As far as identifying SMART as a key part of helping Ohioans this holiday season, Lori Criss, Director of OhioMHAS, points to SMART Recovery's unique approach and demonstrated positive impact. Criss says:

*The process of recovery is highly personal. Having support is crucial to each person's success. Through this investment, we are providing additional options to help Ohioans achieve lasting recovery and wellness.*

The key to reaching Ohioans who are struggling and falling into a downward spiral, Ruth says, is not just convincing them that they are not alone, but giving them a way to take action.

*If we know that there are others out there who are feeling the same kind of way and stressing about the same kinds of things then that can give us hope. And if we then find out there is an easy way to connect with them online, we can begin to build a practical approach to getting through stressful times.*

Which can all add up to turning what might have been the worst of times to something better.

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Founded in 1994, SMART Recovery (Self-Management and Recovery Training) is a global, nonprofit organization that helps people overcome problematic addictive behavior through free in-person and online meetings.

SMART employs science-based techniques that have proven to be effective in helping individuals overcome addiction to substances and harmful activities.

SMART has been endorsed by the leading government and medical authorities in Australia, the UK, and U.S. Learn more: [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org).