



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



**February 2020**

## **Stand Together expands beyond Allegheny County**

For the first time, the anti-stigma program Stand Together is being implemented at a school outside of Allegheny County.

Representatives from the Venango County Department of Human Services first experienced Stand Together during last year's recognition event and decided to pilot it at Oil City High School (OCHS) this school year. Currently, 10 OCHS students comprise the core team responsible for developing educational activities for the remaining 600 students in the high school.

Plans are in place to expand to another Venango County school during the 2020-2021 school year. Stand Together staff is also working with the Staunton Farm Foundation, Greene County Human Services Department, and Intermediate Unit 1 to discuss ways to introduce the program into Greene County next year.

"Other counties are interested in Stand Together because they see poor academic performance, absenteeism, and behavior problems resulting from untreated behavioral health challenges increasing, along with suicide attempts and completions. Stigma toward mental and substance use disorders and a lack of knowledge about treatment resources are two factors that contribute to youth not seeking help," said Mike Gruber, community wellness team coordinator in the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH). "Stand Together student projects address these factors, promote social inclusion, and encourage youth to reach out to a trusted adult when they are concerned about themselves or peers. By expanding Stand Together outside of Allegheny County, we hope to assist other counties in creating safe spaces in schools where students can talk about these sensitive matters without fear of ridicule or shame."