



**SARAH S. ANKER**  
Suffolk County Legislator, Sixth District



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**INFORMATION RELEASE:**  
October 19, 2016

Contact: Theresa Santoro  
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### Legislator Anker Initiates New Family Counseling Program to Combat Substance Abuse



**ROCKY POINT, NY** - Suffolk County Legislator Sarah S. Anker and County Sheriff Vincent F. DeMarco delivered a check for \$10,000 to the North Shore Youth Council (NSYC) in Rocky Point this week, which will be designated for its new Family Counseling Initiative to Combat Substance Abuse. The grant, which is funded from Sheriff's Office asset forfeiture monies, will engage whole families in therapy designed to help them cope, understand the root causes of addiction and support their loved one's recovery.

Legislator Anker proposed the pilot initiative following a conversation with Father Frank Pizzarelli from Hope House in Port Jefferson: "Father Frank is on the front lines in our battle against addiction in Suffolk County and he impressed upon me the importance of the family unit in successfully treating addiction," she said.

When Legislator Anker approached the Sheriff about the possibility of using asset forfeiture funds dedicated for this purpose, DeMarco was all in favor of the project. He stated, "Family therapy can lower relapse rates, help parents with addicted children find effective ways to support their loved one's recovery and even help children with addicted parents deal with their struggles. I am hoping this initiative will serve as a model and get more families involved in recovery."

The North Shore Youth Council serves communities along the northern shore corridor from Port Jefferson to Wading River, as well as the towns of Middle Island, Ridge and Coram. The agency serves hundreds of families each day through their school-based prevention and before and after care programs. According to NSYC's Executive Director, Janene Gentile, "Many people in our community simply can't afford family counseling because money is tight due to lost wages and the cost of treatment. Treatment is the first step, but ongoing family therapy is often essential to getting to the root of the problems that led someone to use drugs in the first place. This grant will defer the cost of family counseling, which will eliminate the most common barrier to families engaging in therapy."

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Laurel Sutton, North Shore Youth Council's Board President, joined with Janene Gentile in thanking the County Sheriff and Legislator for their support. "On behalf of everyone at the North Shore Youth Council and the community we serve, I want to thank Sheriff DeMarco and Legislator Anker for giving us this opportunity to enhance our counseling services to struggling families impacted by the opioid epidemic."

For more information about the Family Counseling Initiative to Combat Substance Abuse, or to schedule an appointment with a counselor, call the NSYC at (631) 744-0207.

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