

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September is FASD Awareness Month

Wildcat Extension District is joining the cause to celebrate September as FASD Awareness month and to increase awareness and support for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs). FASD is a spectrum disorder describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was exposed to alcohol before birth.

Prenatal alcohol exposure is associated with an increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, prematurity, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities. FASDs can impact physical, mental, behavioral, or cognitive development as well as cause growth deficiencies, central nervous system disabilities, and, in only about 10% of people diagnosed, specific facial characteristics. Studies show that up to 1 in 20 U.S. school children may be on the FASD spectrum, a rate more than double that of autism.

Unfortunately, FASD is under-recognized, with support and services not widely available and far too few diagnostic and treatment services currently available. In addition to public health messaging on the importance of avoiding alcohol while pregnant, it is crucial to bring recognition and awareness of children and adults with FASDs and their need for services and support.

Individuals with FASDs benefit from structure, support, understanding, and most importantly, early diagnosis, early intervention, and FASD-informed medical and mental health care. Recognizing the strengths, talents, and gifts that individuals diagnosed with FASD bring to our communities is a great way to celebrate FASD Awareness Month. Human service organizations, health care professionals, educators, and the public are called to action to work together to support the FASD community by increasing awareness, becoming educated, and supporting broader efforts to bring FASD-informed services, interventions, and supports to those with this disability.

For more information on FASD or alcohol use during pregnancy, visit www.fasdunited.org or www.cdc.gov/fasd or contact Michelle Broxterman, mbroxterman@ksu.edu, (620)724-8233.

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