



# NEWS



<http://health.mcleancountyil.gov>

[www.facebook.com/mcleanhealth](http://www.facebook.com/mcleanhealth)

[www.twitter.com/mcleanhealth](http://www.twitter.com/mcleanhealth)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 8, 2017

CONTACT: Lisa Slater  
(309) 888-5489 (office)  
(309) 838-1599 (cell)

## McLean County Board of Health presents 2017 Public Health Award

BLOOMINGTON – Colleen O'Connor, CPS, CADC, a powerful voice in teen suicide prevention efforts in McLean County, was awarded the 2017 McLean County Public Health Award by the McLean County Board of Health at a reception held before the evening's Board of Health meeting. O'Connor was praised for her efforts to prevent youth suicides and reduce the social stigma attached to mental illness and mental health problems. O'Connor overcame her own personal mental health challenges and courageously shares her story of recovery to inspire hope, reduce stigma, and empower teens to ask for help with dealing with mental health issues.

In 2016, while working at Project Oz as a Prevention Specialist, O'Connor established a school-based suicide prevention program developed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) titled, *Ending the Silence*. The program has reached more than 2,000 students at nine public schools, resulting in dozens of students being linked to services including many struggling with suicidal thoughts and attempts.

In addition, O'Connor actively contributes to make a difference in the lives of young people with mental health or substance use challenges by teaching Youth Mental Health First Aid classes within the community. She also facilitates support groups at Chestnut Health Systems, has answered calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at PATH Crisis Center, serves as a part-time case manager in the Addiction Recovery Unit at Advocate BroMenn, and serves as executive director of the NAMI of Livingston/McLean Counties. O'Connor shines as a community leader, role model, and symbol of health and hope in McLean County.

Each year, the McLean County Board of Health Public Health Award honors a McLean County resident, volunteer, or employee who exhibits leadership in a public health-related activity and contributes to health promotion efforts within the county. The contribution can be professional or occupational, in a volunteer or paid capacity; in areas such as the aging population, communicable disease, emergency preparedness, environmental health, health education and promotion, individuals with disabilities, injury prevention, maternal/child health, mental health, nutrition and fitness or any other health-related field.

**-MORE-**

For more information about the McLean County Health Department or the McLean County Board of Health, please visit <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov>. For social media users, "Like" McLeanHealth on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter, for updates about public health affecting you.



###