



## NEWS RELEASE

March 26, 2025

For immediate release

For more information, contact: **Suzanne Crane** 308-672-9800 or [scrane@pphd.ne.gov](mailto:scrane@pphd.ne.gov)

**Panhandle Prevention Coalition Hosts Powerful Symposium on Resilience and Mental Health** – Over 55 professionals from across the Panhandle gathered at the Gering Civic Center on Saturday, March 22, for a transformative day of learning, connection, and inspiration at the 2025 Panhandle Prevention Coalition Symposium: *Building Resilience – Tackling Mental Health and Emerging Behavioral Trends*.

The full-day event offered two distinct sessions focused on critical issues impacting communities, families, and frontline professionals. “Our goal was to create a space where tough conversations could happen—and where people left feeling more equipped and empowered,” said Suzanne Crane, Community Prevention Coordinator for Panhandle Public Health District. “Judging by the engagement, passion, and energy in the room, I believe we achieved just that.”

### **Morning Session: PTSD & Suicide Prevention**

The day began with a compelling keynote from **Sheriff Timothy Whitcomb** of Cattaraugus County, NY. Drawing from personal experience and national data, Sheriff Whitcomb delivered a heartfelt and eye-opening presentation on **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among law enforcement**, with a powerful emphasis on **suicide prevention**.

“The question isn’t if you’ll dance with PTSD in your profession, the question is how many times you will hear the music.” said Sheriff Whitcomb.

Participants walked away with both an emotional connection and actionable strategies for fostering resilience within law enforcement ranks.

### **Afternoon Session: Digital Safety, Pornography, and Emerging Drug Trends**

The afternoon featured two powerful presentations:

**Kirk Fellhoelter**, Morrill County Attorney and Deputy Scotts Bluff County Attorney, delivered a compelling session on **Digital Safety and Pornography** from the prosecution perspective. He provided important legal insights into the risks of online exploitation and the role of prosecution in addressing these offenses. He stated, “Handing a child a cell phone without instruction and oversight is like handing them a loaded gun without training.”

**Trooper Tim Flick**, Community Services Trooper with the Nebraska State Patrol, focused on **Pornography and Emerging Drug Use Trends in the Panhandle**. Drawing from his experience in drug recognition and law enforcement training, Trooper Flick offered a sobering look at the realities local communities are facing. He encouraged attendees “Don’t fall into the stereotype. Educate yourself and think outside the box.”

### **Community Collaboration at its Best**

With generous support from **Banner County Sheriff's Department, Region 22 Emergency Management, Panhandle Regional Medical Response System, and Panhandle Public Health District**, the symposium underscored the power of partnerships in public health and safety.

For additional information about the Panhandle Prevention Coalition call Suzanne Crane at 308-672-9800.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

Photo 1 PTSD & Suicide Prevention - Sheriff Timothy Whitcomb



Photo 2 Digital Safety – Kirk Fellhoelter



Photo 3 Pornography and Emerging Drug Trends - Trooper Tim Flick



Photo 4 Community Collaboration at its Best



This project is funded (4.34%, \$159,500) through the Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant (1B08TI087052-01) via the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, contracted through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health