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News Release

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Byron Middle School Awarded LifeSkills Grant

(Byron, MN) – (November 20, 2019) Byron Middle School has been selected to be part of the pool of eligible schools for the LifeSkills project (LST) with the Minnesota Department of Human Services. In August, Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan announced that the State of Minnesota was awarded a \$2.5 million grant to implement a groundbreaking, evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum in middle schools across the state.

“We see every day the impact of substance use on Minnesota, and on our young. Too many deaths, too many damaged lives—we need to invest in evidence-based policies that have strong record of success,” said Governor Walz. “This grant from Arnold Ventures will help provide schools with a powerful tool to promote prevention and positive, long-term health of our kids.”

Principal Richard Swanson shared, “We are excited to have an opportunity to participate in an evidence-based program that focuses not only on substance abuse but the social and emotional learning needed to help our adolescents make sound

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decisions in all areas of life.” Based on more than 35 years of rigorous scientific research, the LifeSkills curriculum includes skills in resisting peer and media pressure to smoke, drink, or use drugs while also informing students of the consequences of substance abuse. According to Superintendent, Dr. Joey Page, “the grant will help students build their knowledge and skills to make important healthy choices.”

The grant, awarded by Arnold Ventures, will allow Byron Middle School to offer the LifeSkills Training program. “Prevention is a smart investment,” said Myron Frans, commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget. “We are driven to support Minnesota by identifying programs that work and are cost-effective, such as LifeSkills Training. We owe it to all Minnesotans, especially those most impacted by substance use.”

The Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Management and Budget will partner to administer the grant. “This is an example of government collaborating and using proven methods to make a difference in the lives of Minnesota students,” said Acting Commissioner Pam Wheelock of the Minnesota Department of Human Services. “We are excited about this partnership and look forward to seeing real results.”

About LifeSkills Training

BotVin LifeSkills Training (LST) is an evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program that is uniquely designed to be flexible and interactive. The LST program has been extensively tested and proven effective at reducing tobacco, alcohol, opioid, and illicit drug use by as much as 80%. Long-term follow-up studies also show that it produces prevention effects that are durable and long-lasting.

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