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Operation UNITE and Center for Trait-Based Transformation Announce Regional Trait-Based Prevention Initiative

New initiative will equip prevention coordinators to implement a strengths-based, data-informed approach with students across Eastern Kentucky

LOUISVILLE, Ky., September 21, 2026: Operation UNITE and the Center for Trait-Based Transformation (CTBT) have announced a new regional initiative to bring Start from Strength to students across Operation UNITE's service area.

Through the initiative, Operation UNITE Area Prevention Coordinators will be trained and certified to facilitate Start from Strength in participating schools and communities. The initial implementation will have capacity to serve up to 1,000 students.

Start from Strength helps young people identify and develop the strengths they already possess. The experience is grounded in the Trait-Based Model, a framework for developing those strengths through self-awareness, reflection and practice. Students explore traits related to resilience, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, empathy, authenticity, creativity, motivation, determination and other protective factors that contribute to healthy identity development and decision-making.

"This is about building capacity before a young person reaches a crisis," said Dr. Jason Roop, founder and executive director of the Center for Trait-Based Transformation. "Behavior is often the signal, not the starting point. If we can help young people better understand who they are, recognize the strengths they already carry and develop those strengths intentionally, we can approach prevention from an entirely different direction."

The initiative extends beyond curriculum delivery. CTBT will provide facilitator training and certification, digital curriculum access, student assessments, implementation support, data dashboards and outcomes reporting. Operation UNITE's Area Prevention Coordinators will provide local implementation and work with participating schools and communities throughout the region.

The structure is designed to create sustainable local prevention capacity while also measuring student engagement and change over time.

"Operation UNITE has spent years building trusted relationships throughout the communities it serves," Roop said. "What excites us most is the opportunity to combine that local knowledge and prevention leadership with a model designed around human development, measurable outcomes and long-term capacity. We are not simply trying to place another curriculum in schools. We want to help build an infrastructure that can grow."

Students participating in Start from Strength move through six developmental modules addressing identity, personal strengths, self-leadership, balance, relationships and purpose. Assessment and reporting systems will allow implementation teams to examine participation, developmental indicators and student outcomes across participating sites.

Coordinator training is scheduled for September 25, 2026, with school implementation planning supporting the upcoming rollout.

The initial initiative is also intended to provide a foundation for evaluating future expansion across additional schools and communities.

About Operation UNITE

Operation UNITE is a Kentucky-based organization working to address substance use through prevention, treatment support, education and community engagement. Its prevention efforts reach schools and communities throughout Eastern Kentucky.

About the Center for Trait-Based Transformation

The Center for Trait-Based Transformation develops and evaluates the Trait-Based Model, a strengths-centered human development framework used across prevention, recovery, behavioral health, education and community settings. Its Start from Strength experiences combine trait development, self-awareness, reflection, assessment and measurable outcomes to help individuals and organizations build capacity from the strengths people already possess.

Media Contact

Dr. Jason Roop

Founder & Executive Director

Center for Trait-Based Transformation

Jason@StartfromStrength.org

<https://StartfromStrength.org>