

Coalition organizes student assemblies and hosts Community Conversation

Two student assemblies were held at Greenville High School (GHS) for 850 students Grades 9-12 on April 10, 2017. The same evening in the GHS cafeteria at 6:30 p.m., the Coalition hosted a Community Conversation on Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Education. Parents, teachers, school board members, and concerned citizens attended to hear a similar message that was presented to students.

The Coalition would like to thank the assembly speaker panels for dedicating their valuable time and for making a conscious choice to make a difference.

GHS Grades 9-10 & 11-12 Student Assembly Speakers:

- Timothy Kathman, M.D., Internal Medicine, Vice President of Medical Affairs, Wayne HealthCare and Darke County Coroner
- Anna Hatic, D.O., Board Certified Internal Medicine, Family Health (GHS graduate)
- Darke County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Mark Whittaker
- Kelly Harrison Prevention Specialist, Recovery and Wellness of Midwest Ohio
- Molly Hunt, GHS student representative, Darke County We Are The Majority

Community Conversation Evening Speakers:

- Timothy Kathman, M.D., Internal Medicine, Vice President of Medical Affairs, Wayne HealthCare and Darke County Coroner
- Alisha Reiss, M.D., General Surgeon, Wayne HealthCare (Arcanum-Butler graduate)
- Samantha Wolfe, Testimonial regarding personal loss due to substance abuse
- Darke County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Mark Whittaker
- Kelly Harrison Prevention Specialist, Recovery and Wellness of Midwest Ohio
- Ian Ridgeway, Prevention and Wellness Coordinator, Tri County Board of Recovery and Mental Health Services.

During the evening, the substance abuse prevention education program was presented to the adults. Darke County Chamber of Commerce and Coalition President Sharon Deschambeau said all of the school districts have been offered the program and the schools have to invite the Coalition to make a presentation.

I really want to thank Superintendent Fries and Mr. Cassell for caring about their students, and also for bringing what we consider Gold Standard community prevention to your students and to the audience tonight," said Deschambeau.

Superintendent Doug Fries provided opening remarks. A running theme from all of the presenters was "Talk To Your Children".

"Don't think it is just adults we are talking about up here," Chief Deputy Whittaker said. "It's not - I've been surprised. I thought I had my thumb on some things.

I couldn't believe this 17-year-old girl was using heroin. A friend once told me, it is not your job to trust your kids. Talk to your kids about this. Ask them what they know about drugs."

According to Whittaker, last year, first responders received 93 overdose calls (not all deaths) in the county. So far this year, there have been at least 80. Dr. Reiss said they are seeing more and more patients who do not know what they are getting in their drugs. Dealers want more addicts, so they are adding substances, she said. Marijuana is not likely marijuana.

"Marijuana is now being treated and mixed with heroin and fentanyl," she said. "Talk to your family about this. Three out of four people who abused heroin, abused prescription narcotics first. More than half of the people who abuse prescriptions don't pay for them. They are coming out of our medicine cabinets. Only 15 percent are paid for from a dealer.

This is part of the problem - getting rid of those drugs. Lock up your medicine cabinets."

Prevention and Wellness Coordinator Ian Ridgeway brought the traveling exhibit "Hidden in Plain Sight" for parents to become more in-the-know regarding warning signs of risky behavior from their children.

The exhibit, a child's room, is open for adults/parents go through and identify possible clues that indicate substance abuse activities. About 57 items held clues to suspicious behavior.

Testimonials

Providing a *consistent* message that is scientific-fact, evidence-based, age appropriate and approved by our mental health professionals is essential to a community substance abuse prevention education program.

Greenville High School Learning Center Director, Careers with Children Amy Schoen brought her students to the morning event and attended the evening event with the parents. After the school assemblies Amy Schoen asked her students to speak or write in their journals about their feelings of the presentation.

Some of the students are living with this every day in different ways, either in their homes or around them. A lot of them didn't know about it (heroin, fentanyl or other drugs) being in the marijuana. They were saying they had no idea. They felt it was very impactful for them to sit in that assembly and hear some of those things today. I thank the panel for coming. After hearing the juniors and seniors, it was an opportunity for our kids to hear from the professionals to know what is really going on."

"Some of my students are uncomfortable sharing their personal stories," Schoen said, but they wrote and wrote about it. Some of them were writing on the front and back, just filling up their pages with their thoughts and feelings. Some of them are living with this every day in different ways, either in their homes or around them. A lot of them didn't know about it (heroin, fentanyl or other drugs) being in the marijuana.

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- **Amy Schoen**, Greenville High School Learning Center Director, Careers with Children

"Bringing this youth substance abuse prevention education program to the high school students was one of the most rewarding things that I have done in my 35-year career in education. Information on addiction and substance abuse, including heroin, was delivered by experts. Giving our students accurate information and raising the level of awareness about substance abuse will serve our students as they make life choices. School administration was aware of one student in each assembly that recently lost a parent to heroin. Thanks to the Coalition for organizing our student assemblies."

- **Jeffrey S. Cassell**, Greenville Senior High School Principal, Greenville City Schools

"The Coalition believes in delivering a consistent message to youth that drugs can devastate their lives and destroy their futures. We need to share that message whenever and wherever there is a teachable moment."

- **Sharon Deschambeau**, president, Darke County Chamber of Commerce and Coalition.



On April 10, 2017, the Coalition organized a program in conjunction with Greenville High School Principal Jeff Cassell to provide scientific data, evidence-based information and youth-led prevention dialogue about the growing addiction and substance abuse problem in the county. Approximately 850, 9-12th grade students were recipients of that program through an assembly at the school.



Prevention and Wellness Coordinator Ian Ridgeway, of Tri-County Board of Recovery and Mental Health Services, helped educate adults who attended the Coalition for a Healthy Darke County's educational program about substance abuse in Darke County at Greenville High School on April 10. In

the traveling exhibit, "Hidden in Plain Sight," Ridgeway pointed out some warning signs of risky behavior than can be found in a child's bedroom.