

Drug Coalition Addressing Challenges through Communication and Collaboration

By Stacy Hrinko

Help is available for individuals and families seeking assistance with addiction and related issues here in Noble County. That was the positive takeaway from the most recent gathering of Noble County community leaders and service providers who met to look for answers to the growing problem of opiate addiction.

From prevention and awareness programs in the schools to parent education available through the Noble County Health Department and GMN Head Start and counseling services provided by Allwell and Noble Behavioral Health, there are opportunities to get the help needed for families and individuals who are dealing with addiction or who are hoping to prevent addiction.

The challenge comes in communicating the availability of those services to the people most in need of the services and information. Noble Local Superintendent Dan Leffingwell led members of the community in identifying those resources for counseling and treatment and for education and prevention programs in the local area.

Those attending were divided into six smaller

groups for breakout discussions based on their area of expertise or service: law, education, medical, counseling, social service and business/media/clergy with each group sharing their findings. The majority agreed that sharing information of programs, training opportunities and resources between service providers, and then to the public, is one of the first steps necessary to alleviate the growing drug problem.

Tim Buchanan, warden of Noble Correctional Institution, emphasized the need for a focus on open communication and collaboration between county agencies and community groups rather than a focus on funding.

In addition to determining the need for more effective communication of area resources, other challenges discussed by the group included a need for clear and streamlined protocols for referrals, a change of attitudes toward addiction and up-to-date training for business and service professionals.

While certainly not an exhaustive list of the community issues surrounding the drug problem, working on these few will be the coalition's concentration for the near future. The coalition will reconvene in February.

SHS Plans Be Aware Program

The Be Aware program is coming to Shenandoah High School, where a community-wide event will be held at 6 p.m. Feb. 16 in the auditorium. Parents and members of the public are welcome to attend.

The Be Aware program is a mobile, educational tool targeting adults who are 18 years of age or older to inform them of the not-so-easily identifiable signs of drug use and abuse in our communities. Those who visit the Be Aware trailer will have an interactive experience, walking through a replica of a home where they will encounter the

indicators of high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, underage drinking, prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse, as well as the signs that could indicate the manufacture of illegal drugs.

The Be Aware program is overseen by a collaboration team comprised of members from Alcohol and Drug Services of Guernsey County, Guernsey County Sheriff's Office, Guernsey Noble Safety Council, Ohio Valley Educational Service Center, Guernsey County Juvenile Court, Guernsey County Health Department and Deerassic Education Center.