



The SCORE Report

“When it gets dark enough you can see the stars.” -Charles Beard

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Introduction to the SCORE Report

Welcome to the first SCORE Report, Surry County Opioid Response Effort newsletter. Each month this report will be issued from the office of the Surry County Opioid Response Director to provide an update on efforts made through community partnerships to address our substance use issues.

Also included will be the weekly question from a member of the community which Denise, from the Surry County Opioid Response Office, will answer in her weekly newspaper column. These can be used for education and community discussion and will cover a different topic each issue.

Faith Community Meetings: May 7th & June 4th

There was a great response from our faith community at our first Faith Community Opioid Forum on May 7th 2019! All participants came ready to learn and work!

Mark Willis, the Opioid Response Director for Surry County, was the facilitator for the event and presentations were given by the Health and Nutrition Center, Insight Human Services, Easter Seals, Emergency Medical Services, Daymark Recovery Services, and a panel of County residents who were personally affected by our growing drug use problems.

The day long seminar was an overview of how the opioid epidemic is impacting Surry County. The seminar provided statistics as well as an explanation of the evolution of the problem. The participants were given a list of resources and services for those caught up in this opioid problem.

At the conclusion of the forum, a list was provided of possible goals and actions the faith community could take to work together to positively impact substance use, not only within each congregation, but throughout the County. Attendees were asked to return on June 4th to further discuss these goals. During the follow-up meeting on June 4th, faith community leaders agreed to build a volunteer transportation network to support those in treatment and recovery.

Prevention/Education Opportunities

Amanda Clark, the Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist from the Surry County Health and Nutrition Center and Denise Krochta, author of the book “Sweat: A Practical Plan for Keeping Your Heart Intact While Loving an Addict”, host of the podcast “Addicted to Addicts: Survival 101”, and member of the Surry County Opioid Response Office, offer educational opportunities to the community by appointment. Amanda can be reached at clarka@co.surry.nc.us and Denise can be reached at krochta@co.surry.nc.us

Information about July 9th Meeting

There will be a third Faith Community Opioid Task Force meeting on July 9th, 2019 at 9 A.M. at the Surry Service Center, 915 E. Atkins Street, Dobson, to work on the details of the volunteer transportation network. We will also continue to discuss other goals for the faith community. **All members of the faith community are invited to this meeting.**

Of special note, Beth Macy, bestselling author of *Dopesick*, plans to attend the July 9th meeting. As a resident of southern Virginia she has taken a personal interest in the effect of drugs on rural communities like Surry County. You may have attended her recent presentation at Surry Community College. Ms. Macy has documented the impact of the opioid crisis on families and first responders in rural America.

Dear Denise:

I don't know anyone who uses, why should the opioid epidemic matter to me?

Sincerely,

Wendy

Dear Wendy:

This is a great question to start off this column. A question I am sure many people have interest in. Statistics show that there is a widespread problem with regards to this epidemic in Surry County and sometimes we just don't know what we don't know.

Do you go to the dentist? Do you have a favorite doctor who takes care of you? When you need care is a nurse important to you? One of the main things about this opioid problem is that it is a little different than addictions we are most familiar with. This epidemic began with prescribing legal drugs by doctors. Even now, most people can't understand this addiction because these pills are legally prescribed by doctors mostly for relieving pain. Fact, almost anything can be abused and misused. This is a perfect example. Access and opportunity play a big role in the prescription drug part of this epidemic. Many medical professionals around the country have been caught up in this epidemic. Some of the effects of abusing opioids are losing focus, being overly tired, bad judgement, anger and control. Often it is difficult to recognize this in people who use when we only see them once in awhile. Most of the time there is no smell (like with alcohol) or overt signs of use (like stumbling or slurring words). Have you ever seen the tv programs "House" or "Nurse Jackie"? One about a doctor and one about a nurse who abuse prescription drugs but still continue care of their patients. Although these are fictional depictions that were drawn from the real world, this should be a concern for everyone who goes to a medical professional for help.

Would you like to know that the pilot flying your plane or the taxi driver taking you to your destination misuses medication? How about just being on our roads and highways at the same time someone who is using happens to be there too? Is this a concern? Frankly, just about every human has some access to prescription pills available for abuse. Teachers, first responders, bankers, lawyers, crossing guards, etc.

Did you know that heroin users use syringes? Sometimes people who abuse pills also melt them down and inject with syringes. Have you ever seen used syringes in a public bathroom, parking lot, on the street? Do you know that they are often found on playgrounds, accessible to kids? Should this be something we all should care about?

From my own experience I know that not only people who use these drugs but also those who love them experience many bouts of low focus, distraction, lack of sleep, and energy. How does this affect productivity in the workplace? It is a very negative force and happens everywhere. Should we all be concerned? These are just a few examples for why everyone should care about helping Surry County to combat this epidemic to bring health and well-being for all who live here.

One more thing that I feel important to mention, again learned from my own experience. Addiction carries huge stigma, with many people believing it involves low or no moral character and criminality. Most people do not share that they are experiencing this in their own families or workplace because of this. This question posed here, ("I don't know anyone who uses, why should I care about the opioid epidemic?"), brings me to a question for you and all readers.

Do you really not know someone who uses, or perhaps you just don't know that you know?

Regards,

Denise Krochta