

updates and goals part 1

Dear Denise:

I have been reading your weekly articles for the last few months. Thank you for educating our community on this topic.

In your early letters you explained to us why the Surry County Opioid Response Department was formed and about some of the goals. Can you please tell us what your department has been doing and if any goals have been met?

Thanks,
Brent

Dear Brent:

It's the perfect time for this request. Lots of things are happening and it is a good plan to update the community.

The Opioid Response Department was started to reduce the size of the drug using population to cut down on crime, overdoses and deaths, and to help heal Surry County. After almost a year of information gathering and education, Mr. Willis, the department director, began forming a plan to combat this problem. One of the more important facts that have come from his investigation is that we can't arrest ourselves out of this problem. Communities all over our nation have recognized this. What we have been doing hasn't been working and we need to do something different.

So, here is what we've been working on.

We have enlisted the participation of the Surry County Faith Based Community to help us to compassionately heal our community. They have been engaged and open minded and truly key to some of our plans. With them we have developed a transportation system to help those who would like to get treatment and better themselves but cannot get to treatment sessions because of transportation problems. The system has been formed and is about to be implemented.

We have spent time educating this group about what we know and have learned about how this problem is permeating through our county and together we have continued to choose important issues for advocacy as well as educating our community.

Another area that we have focused on is making treatment more available in the County. Until recently there were very few options for treatment. In the next few months there will be at least 3 more treatment options coming to our County that will help with choice and availability. Everyone who needs and wants treatment, no matter their location or financial status, should be able to participate.

We are also doing something that has been successful in many communities around the nation that we hope will be successful here. If the addiction field is not something you are familiar with, which is true for most people, this plan will be a new and different concept to understand.

We are hiring what they call Peer Support Specialists to be placed in the local hospital emergency rooms and on the streets. When people who have overdosed are brought in (and this happens a lot more often than our general public thinks) there will be someone

there to talk to them, give them support, information about services in the county, encourage them to seek immediate help as well as get them there. I will talk more about these Peer Support Specialists and what they do in part 2 next week.

We have developed a “care package” that is given out by our first responders. Many people will not end up going to a hospital after an overdose so won’t be always able to benefit from our Peer Support program. In the package is a multitude of services and resources, including phone numbers to call for treatment and services. This package is available to anyone who is interested in resources for themselves or family or friends.

We have developed a new website. In fact, our care package can be downloaded from our website for anyone to use. Check our website and continue to use it for resources and information. It will be updated on a regular basis. This weekly letter can be found on the website as well as a new podcast (soon to come).

- We also have developed a Surry County Opioid Response facebook page, if that is where you would prefer to get your information. We are out in the community speaking and available for speaking engagements.

Check part 2 of this letter next week for a more detailed explanation of how some of these programs work and how we hope they will work in our County.

Regards,
Denise Krochta

updates and goals part 2

The letter this week is the second part of my answer to Brent’s question where he asked “What has the Surry County Opioid Response Effort” accomplished since it has been a part of the County?”

Last week we talked about some of the things we have been working on to help reduce drug overdoses, deaths, and the general drug environment here in Surry County. A transportation network, Peer Support Specialists, Care packages, new website, and public education were some of the things I mentioned in my letter last week. This week I will detail what these are and what we hope they will accomplish for our county.

After some research out and about in the community and through the existing treatment facilities, we were told that Surry County was one of the very few counties in the US that had availability in programs for treatment on a regular basis. In most of our country one of the major issues is that when someone decides he/she is ready for treatment it is important that they go immediately. In most places people must wait for spots to become available. Not so here in Surry County. It was presented to us that transportation is one of the problems. The County is quite expansive and treatment is mostly available in Mount Airy and more recently in the Elkin area. We have been working hard with our faith based community to develop a “transportation system” to team up community members willing to transport those who have no transportation, to and from treatment sessions. We are working on some training and coordination and hope to have this up and running within the next month. For information about this program please feel free to call Mark Willis, the

Surry County Opioid Response Director (336)401-8218.

We are interviewing for the job of Peer Support Specialists to place both in hospital emergency rooms and on the streets to support and connect those who might be at the moment of acceptance for help if they can be “walked and talked” through how it might work. Peer Support Specialists are people living in recovery from mental illness or substance use disorder (in this case the latter) who provide support to others who can benefit from their own life experiences. Here in North Carolina these individuals meet a set of requirements. There are both time requirements (time in recovery) as well as State certified training requirements to become a PSS. Here in Surry County this certification will be required for these positions. Some of the tasks performed by Peer Support Specialists include helping to set goals for recovery, sharing coping and self-help skills, giving support during a crisis, finding effective services and support for those in need. Again, for more information about Peer Support in Surry County please contact Mark Willis, the Surry County Opioid Response Director at (336)401-8218

Development of our new website (surrycountycares.com) is ongoing with plenty of resources and information already posted. On it you will find these weekly letters, resources for treatment and support, information for families, contact information for those of us who are a part of the Surry County Opioid Response Effort, informational videos, and our care package. Please visit regularly for ongoing updated information.

Our Care Package, which is distributed by our office and shared with First Responders and in the Emergency rooms at the hospitals, consists of resources that can be useful for those who need help and also for their families. In it can be found important phone numbers for services including treatment, therapy, medical treatment, support, family issues. Although we have limited our distribution up til this point, we now have it available on our website, as stated above, for anyone to download for themselves, their loved ones, friends, co-workers, congregations, and anyone who might need this support. Feel free to check it out on the website and download if you would like.

You can also access our new Facebook page from our website or by going to Facebook and searching Surry County Opioid Response Effort.

All of us in the department of Opioid Response are also available for presentations throughout the community. Education and Support are very important and community outreach is essential to making all of this work. Feel free to email me or call Mark Willis to set up an education session if you have interest. (krochtad@co.surry.nc.us). We have been and will continue to work hard to combat drug addiction in our county and will always be open to help from our community. It is a joint effort.

Thanks,
Denise Krochta