

MEDINA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT NEWSLETTER

JUDGE KEVIN W. DUNN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016

MEDINA HIGH SCHOOL HOSTS OPIOID FORUM ADDRESSING HEROIN EPIDEMIC IN MEDINA COUNTY

Heroin is an equal opportunity killer. It does not discriminate, crossing socio-economic and racial lines. That was the message at the October 25 Ohio's Opioid Epidemic forum at Medina High School.

Judge Kevin W. Dunn joined a panel with Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge Timothy Plancon, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio Carole Rendon, Director of the Medina

County Drug Task Force Gary Hubbard, and parent of an addict, Fred DiMarco. The panel spoke to approximately 60 attendees about the dangers of the drug, the alarming increase in use and availability, and how community involvement can help.

"Opiates have not avoided a single state or metropolitan area in our country," Plancon said, citing nearly 47,000 overdose deaths in 2014. Hubbard added that there have been 198 reported overdoses in Medina County this year, resulting in 29 deaths.

Youth in Medina County are not exempt. Since 2010, Judge Dunn reports 44 court-involved youth have tested positive for opiates, with just 14 percent of those youth originally charged with an opiate-related offense. That means youth who come to



Judge Dunn shares statistics of heroin use of court-involved youth in Medina County at the MHS Opioid Epidemic Forum.

Court on a simple truancy or disorderly conduct charge are escalating and using opiates.

"This epidemic requires constant supervision and effort from the community," Judge Dunn said. "Don't let your kids get close enough to the drug to be at risk. Teach them about the dangers early."

Judge Dunn also urged parents to take advantage of county programs, such as

Hidden in Plain Sight, a traveling exhibit to help parents notice warning signs of risky behaviors that can be found in their child's bedroom.

All panelists agreed that community communication and early prevention is key to decreasing opiate abuse. Attorney Rendon suggests those prescribed an opiate request only the necessary quantity needed and safely discard any remaining doses at county D.U.M.P. locations. Since October 2011, more than nine tons of medication have been collected in the unused medication disposal boxes.

"Ending this epidemic will take continual education, starting at a young age," DiMarco said. "The courts can't do it alone, the police can't do it alone, but collectively, we can."

JUDGE DUNN SWEARS IN NEW JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT DEPUTY CLERKS

Meet Medina County Juvenile and Probate Court's newest Deputy Clerks, Sharon Wright and LeAnna Hernandez! Juvenile Court Deputy Clerk Wright (left) and Probate Court Deputy Clerk Hernandez (right) were both sworn in by Judge Dunn October 24.



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SURVEY RESULTS GAUGE EFFECTIVENESS OF TAKE CONTROL TEEN DRIVING PROGRAM

Thanks to the collaboration between the Center for Innovation and Growth (CIG) at Baldwin Wallace University, Montville Township Police Department, Westfield Insurance, and Medina County Probate and Juvenile Court, survey results are available evaluating the impact of the Take Control driving program offered in Medina County.

Six CIG interns conducted secondary market research, comparing Take Control to similar teen-driver safety programs nationally based on cost, focus, duration, and instruction techniques. The most significant finding of the study was that Take Control is distinctive as it is free, taught by officers, and has some level of parent involvement. The survey also collected data from 58 graduates of Take Control. Included in the data was graduates' confidence in the skills taught, most memorable lessons, and their willingness to recommend the program to others.

The survey found that the overall perspective of the Take Control program is positive, with 84 percent of graduates surveyed responding that they found the program fun and informative; and 95 percent reporting that they would recommend the Take Control program to others.

"I learned more on that day (at Take Control) than I did with the (Driver's Ed) in-cars," said one graduate.

The survey also found that the Take Control format taught by officers improved perceptions of the police by 53 percent.

"(The officers) were really cool," a Take Control graduate said. "I think it helped to eliminate the stigma that they are just out to give tickets."

The CIG survey found that graduates ranked themselves higher in confidence and safety after completing the program, with 68 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are confident in their ability to use shuffle steering, to maneuver their vehicle in reverse or to avoid a road hazard, to recover from a skid, and to use Anti-lock



CIG interns present Take Control survey results to Westfield Insurance, Montville Township Police and Judge Kevin W. Dunn.

Braking System. The graduates' ability to use skills to avoid accidents taught during Take Control is evident with 92 percent of the graduates reporting a near miss accident after completing the program.

Despite reports of avoiding accidents or lessening the severity of accidents among the graduates, speeding and distracted driving is still a concern. Seven of the 58 graduates surveyed report they received a traffic citation for speeding after completing the program.

In addition, 67 percent of graduates surveyed admit to driving 10 to 19 miles per hour over the speed limit; 83 percent admit to driving while distracted by a cell phone, radio, passengers or eating; and 93 percent of graduates surveyed admit to driving through a yellow light.

CIG interns said they found that part of the problem is that the 11 teens who participated in the focus group reported multi-tasking and being in a hurry is simply a way of life. The conclusion from the focus groups was the sense that Take Control graduates feel like safer, more confident drivers, but they are not necessarily refraining from or avoiding risky behavior.

The BW CIG interns offered recommendations for improvement to the program. Their first recommendation is to continue to share personal stories.

"It is very unfortunate that these tragic stories exist, but it is important that Take Control continues to share these experiences with the students so they understand the serious risks they take while driving," CIG Intern Sydney Clark said. "The students agreed that they could especially relate to them because they were local teenagers that were involved. The stories are really making an impact."

Tammy Schaffer, a mother who lost her child in a car accident, added that the survey results impact the



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JUVENILE COURT HOSTS GAL TRAINING HIGHLIGHTING SERVICES AVAILABLE AND REPORTING EXPECTATIONS

The Medina County Juvenile Court hosted a training session on October 14 for Guardians *ad Litem* (GAL) to address expectations and requirements for appointed GALs, and increase awareness of newer services and programs available both through the Court and in the community.

The Medina County Juvenile and Probate Court appoints Guardians *ad Litem* to represent the best interests of children. A GAL is responsible for gathering relevant information regarding the child's home life, family history, and schooling in order to provide an informed recommendation to the Court.

"You are the first barrier to help protect a child in our community," Judge Kevin W. Dunn said. "It's a heavy obligation but it's important that you do a great job to protect that child's best interests."

Chief Magistrate Susana Lewis said that, unfortunately, the county is experiencing an influx of heroin use, creating a higher need for GALs. Job and Family Services Attorney Jennifer Moore also noted that she has seen an increase in heroin use in JFS referrals.

In addition to discussing expectations of GALs in situations of emergency, the goal of the training was to review Superintendence Rule 48, and Medina County Juvenile Court Local Rule 18, and to overview programs and services provided by the Court and the community to connect families to resources.

Judge Dunn has implemented new programs for youth and their families. The first implementation was the Juvenile Court Intake Department. Juveniles who appear

before the Court for the first time meet with the Intake Officer one hour prior to their hearing for an Intake Interview. During this interview, the Intake Officer is able to gather information regarding mental health history, drug and alcohol history, school attendance, grades, and social history. This information helps the Judge and Magistrate's determine the best services or programs needed for the Juvenile and their family, and to identify areas of concern. The Intake Interview also helps determine the level of supervision needed, as well as other orders necessary to protect victims and the community.

Another new program available through Juvenile Court is the Teen Intervention 180 (Ti-180) program. Ti-180 helps provide early intervention for substance use, increase resiliency, and provide parents with education regarding signs and symptoms of substance use. The Ti-180 program also identifies those youth who could benefit from a behavioral health assessment based on the results of the screening tools that are administered prior to the program, as well as, urine drug screen results.

Magistrates Lisa Louy and Dennis Paul urged the GALs to not only speak with Court personnel, but to exhaust every possible source for information before submitting their Guardian *ad Litem* report to the Court.

"Dig deep into records from the schools and the doctor's office, talk to neighbors and caretakers," Magistrate Paul advised. "There is a mountain of information out there. We need you to bring that mountain to us in the courtroom so that we can act in the best interest of the child."

JUDGE DUNN APPOINTS MARIBETH FLOWERS AS MEDINA COUNTY HUMANE AGENT



Attorney J. Jeffrey Holland, Medina County Humane Agent Maribeth Flowers and Judge Kevin W. Dunn.

The Medina County SPCA Board of Trustees Board of Directors chose Maribeth Flowers to serve as Medina County Humane Agent in September, subject to approval from the Medina County Probate Court. Judge Kevin W. Dunn agreed with the Board's decision that Flowers is the best fit for the position and legally appointed her as Humane Agent October 11.

The Medina County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

Animals (SPCA) has been operating as the County Humane Society since March 28, 1985. The SPCA responds to and investigates allegations of animal cruelty, neglect, and abandonment every year with many cases resulting in successful criminal prosecution of offenders.

Flowers, a resident of Medina County, first began working with

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Humane Agent

animals in 2006 volunteering at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. She went on to earn promotions to become Zoo Crew Lead and Seasonal Education Interpreter where she educated the public about wildlife and zoo exhibits.

"As young as I can remember, I've always loved animals," Flowers said. "My mom would take me to the zoo every weekend and I knew I wanted to work there and learn more about animals and the natural world."

In the years since, Flowers has expanded her knowledge of animal handling, conservation and enforcement of animal cruelty and neglect violations. Flowers has experience working as Humane Agent, Field Training Officer for the Cleveland Animal Protective League, and as a Volunteer Consultant to Humane Agent for Lake Humane Society. She also currently serves as a Polar Bears International Arctic Ambassador after traveling to the Subarctic for a week in 2008. Flowers said not only did she study wild polar bears and gather information to educate the public regarding conservation issues, she said her experience in the Subarctic taught her other valuable skills, including effective communication with both small and large audiences.

"The best part about working with animals is knowing that you've made the world a better place than when you walked into work that morning," she

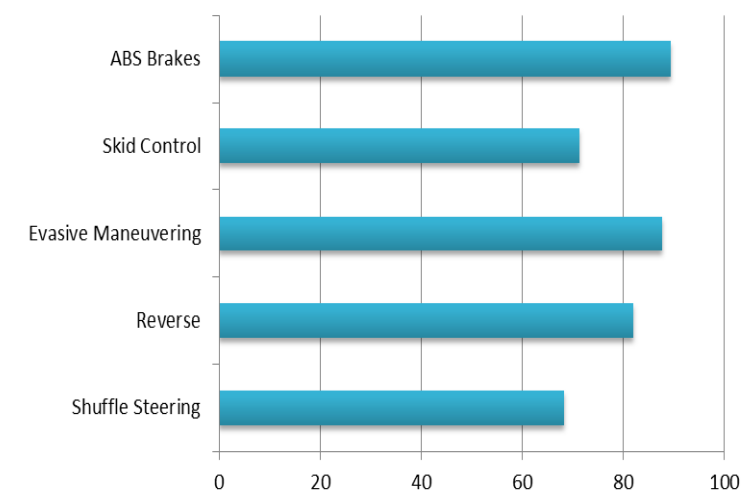
said. "It can get messy, but you have to push through the fleas and the dirty houses. I've never come across a situation so bad that it kept me from doing my job. I will help animals no matter the situation."

Flowers said she wants Medina County residents to know that they have a motivated Humane Agent who will investigate cruelty and neglect of animals effectively and transparently. She also wants county residents to be aware that there are emergency rescue technicians available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"It doesn't matter if it's one o'clock in the morning," Flowers said. "If an animal needs help, residents can call the Medina County SPCA at (330) 723-7722. Those rescue technicians are the real heroes and we will make sure that any animal is taken care of."

Confidence in Take Control Skills

The graph below shows the percentage of CIG Survey participants who agree or strongly agree that their confidence in the following driving skills has increased since completing Take Control.



Take Control

families involved with Take Control. Schaffer explained that while it's bittersweet, she appreciates the support from the police departments, the Court, Westfield Insurance and the Center for Innovation and Growth to help continue to improve the program.

Other recommendations for program improvement include increased in-car time, utilization of simulators, and continued partnerships with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, schools, and parents.

Montville Township Chief of Police Terry Grice and Judge Dunn thanked the interns for their hard work gathering this necessary data.

"There is a real world impact because of your survey and focus groups," Judge Dunn said. "This creates a baseline for us for an evidence-based program. We can continue to make improvements to the program and track changes to ensure that we are offering young drivers the best possible training."

To learn more about Take Control, visit www.takecontroldriving.org.