

## GHC Regular Monthly Meeting October 25, 2019 Panel Discussion on Opioid Epidemic



(L-R: Bruce Poole, Councilwoman Emily Keller, Brooke Buckley, M.D., Sheriff Doug Mullendore, Kevin Simmers)

### **What are some soundbites, data, points you'd like our members to take away from this discussion?**

- Studies are showing that 50% of the population is susceptible to becoming addicted to opioid drugs in 7 days (others can be longer or never addicted).
- Legal drug distributors are required by law to "control" distribution and track problem areas, but they did not do that with opioids because the money was so good. There is evidence showing quotes from within these companies saying things like: "We are selling these like Cheetos", "Making more money than street drugs", etc. So, drug companies had the data to know what was happening and did nothing about it.
- At our worst time, Washington County had 149 opioid prescriptions per 100 people. The worst area was a small town in Morgan Co., WV that had 400 people and over 12M prescriptions.
- We need Drug Education "EARLY AND OFTEN" to prevent people from falling to addiction. We need to eliminate the stigma and normalize the community conversation around add
- Each year September is "Recovery Month" – and the color representing this initiative is purple. Please assist our community each September by participating in the many outreach programs including Washington Goes Purple

- 75%-82% of addicts began with Prescription Medications. Studies show only 15% of parents have talked to their children about the addictiveness of prescription drugs as well as alcohol and illegal drugs
- We got into this problem as a community and it will take the whole community to get out
- The Sheriff department has come across a form of fentanyl that was immune to Narcan
- The Sheriff's Dept is hosting a "Drug Take Back" event on Saturday from 9am-1pm at Premium Outlets – you can drop off your unused prescriptions as well as documents you need shredded (paper shredding has limits)
- "You can't lock everyone up". Sober Housing, addiction counseling, mental health counseling, medically assisted treatment, and finding people a job is important part of the recovery process. We also have a successful Day Reporting Center, Drug Court, and LEAD Program (Law enforcement assisted diversion) which help divert people from the criminal justice system into treatment and recovery.
- Probably 90% of our illegal drugs are coming in through Mexico. Drug Cartels have brutal control
- Local Data:
  - **2016:** 290 Overdoses in our county (39 resulted in death)
  - **2017:** 306 Overdoses in our county (37 resulted in death)
  - **2018:** 348 Overdoses in our county (64 resulted in death) (220 in Hagerstown, 128 in County)
  - **2019 (9-1/2 mos.):** 254 Overdoses in our county (42 resulted in death)
- **72,000 fatalities nationwide**
- **Meritus is an engaged partner in this community initiative** –Meritus is continuing to look within their system of care to find where they can positively impact this issue. Education on proper dosing is important (including Dentist profession). Their EPIC record keeping system recently installed will allow them to better track dosing and prescribing patterns throughout their system. They have set a goal to reduce the number of pills prescribed by 50% - but must balance this goal with proper pain management needed by their patients (ambitious level)
- **Brooke's House** is not only the best-looking treatment center in MD, it's the nicest one in the country.
- We are seeing some slow progress, but still crawling. We need to keep focused on this issue and keep following the data to ensure positive trends do not reverse.





## How can GHC members support your organization or help our community combat this issue?

- **Lobby your federal officials (Sen. Van Hollen, Sen. Cardin, Congressman Trone) to provide money NOW to combat opioid use** – There will likely be funding coming from the many local and national lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies (as with big tobacco), but it will take a couple years for these cases to get settled. We need federal funding now to keep the recovery work going until these cases are settled. Without funding there will be pressure to settle quick at well below the level offenders should pay.
- **“Cooperate and Collaborate”** – As funding for this issue becomes available, all the jurisdictions and stakeholders need to work together to see that these resources are used affectively and applied strategically to have the best impact. This is a community wide issue.
- **Get trained to administer [Narcan](#) AND carry it with you** – Narcan is a drug that enables breathing for people that have overdosed. It is not harmful if it is given mistakenly to someone who appears to have overdosed but is suffering from a different illness. [Maryland’s Good Samaritan Law](#) protects you from any worries about liability. You can get trained for free at the Health Dept and Narcan can be purchased at any pharmacy without a prescription.
- **Get connected to [Washington Goes Purple](#)** – WGP is a substance abuse awareness program that engages our community and its youth to stand against substance abuse. They are willing to come to your business or organization to talk about this issue. Invite them in for speaking opportunities as their success depends on getting the word out and educating our citizens.
- **Meritus a “safe place” to discuss or ask questions about opioid use** - So feel free to contact them or talk to your doctor.
- **The business community needs to become engaged and assist with providing job opportunities to those affected** – People deserve a second chance. This is a complicated community issue and it’s going to take everyone collaborating to improve our condition. Employers will play a major role in our success. Getting someone sober is a challenge of its own, but if they cannot find meaningful employment due to past transgressions, they are much more likely to fall back into addiction. **Evaluate the positions you have to identify those where someone recovering from addiction may succeed.** GHC member Dave Shuster noted that Horizon Goodwill has programs that can assist with job training and transitions using case worker oversight. Feel free to contact them.
- **Support [Brooke’s House](#) and their internal job programs** – For an addict to succeed in recovery, they need: Counseling/Mental Health treatment, Medically assisted treatment, and Jobs and Social enterprise. Brooke’s House provides girls 4 opportunities within their home. These enterprises provide girls confidence, job training, and as well as help fund the operational costs of the facility. Their goal is to build up these programs to the point where all the operational costs are fully covered. Please reach out to staff if you can use any of these services. The services include:
  - **Hair Salon**
  - **Pet Grooming**
  - **Junk Removal** – 12 girls can come to your home or business and remove unwanted items for a donation to Brooke’s House
  - **[Homemade Chocolates](#)** – After seeing Kevin Simmers, a businessman from Cape Cod contacted Kevin and offered to provide him with a business plan and training in making homemade chocolates. Their chocolates are delicious and a great company or Holiday gift (*see forms attached*).

