

MYKAL RIFFLE

PERRY, OH

How is the opioid epidemic affecting you, your family, and your neighborhood? :

My younger son and wife were addicts for a couple of years, taking suboxone to deal with their opioid addiction. Unfortunately, suboxone is not a great alternative to getting clean, and unless a doctor properly administers (weans off) and oversees the process, suboxone becomes the new addicting drug that can be abused. They got arrested in Hocking and Vinton Counties, and eventually sent to prison for having meth around their young children. My son was given 4 years and 11 months, with early judicial release this September after 2 1/2 years. This has affected everyone's lives in our family, including the children being placed with their great aunt and uncle.

The court system does not allow many struggling addicts/probationers a chance in succeeding with turning their lives around and beating the addiction, as if a person does not have transportation and lives in the country or works, it may be difficult for that probationer to make it to the unannounced drug test, whether due to lack of transportation or having the ability to take off from work without being fired. There needs to be stronger support in the communities, as well as commitments from local employers to hire parolees/probationers convicted of drug felonies who are trying to turn their lives around. After all, if a parolee/probationer is required to have a job and a house, if there are no job opportunities, then a person has no job or income to support their family, which violates their probation and sends them back to jail or prison. A vicious cycle.

What do you see as causes of the epidemic in your community and in Ohio? :

Lack of full time jobs, lack of community support, lack of mentors, lack of cheap wholesome family activities, lack of employers willing to hire former addicts, lack of drug programs that work around working people. Also, other avenues for treatment need explored and doctors need to prescribe treatment that is effective vs. making them lots of money (i.e., suboxone vs. Other alternatives).

What steps might we take as a state to combat the opioid epidemic? :

Doctors need to be held accountable for the drugs they prescribe to help "wean" addicts off of opioids. The community, including employers, churches, support groups, need to be more involved with addicts and their families.

What might we do as individuals and a community to reduce opioid abuse?:

There also needs to be support groups in the community for the family members dealing with a loved one going through addiction. There is a support group in Waverly that I attended that definitely helped out, but that is almost a 2 hour drive for me.

Anything else you'd like to share?:

As a parent, it is difficult to watch your son destroy his life and family with his addiction. You have to stay strong, not support their habits by 'giving' them money. I can be contacted to discuss my experience and insight. I was hoping to attend the meeting in Newark tonight, but this was the only evening I had to be home with my family this week.