

# Your Voice Mid-Ohio Valley: **Belpre**

**Exploring Community Solutions  
to the Addiction Crisis**

July 2018



The Mid-Ohio Valley, situated across the banks of the Ohio River, includes parts of Ohio and West Virginia. These states have been ranked as number 1 and number 2 in the nation for overdose death rates: nearly 5,000 people are dying each year of opioid overdoses in these states alone. This addiction crisis continues to affect the health, social, and economic welfare of these communities, and isn't showing signs of slowing down.

At the same time, productive and community-oriented coverage of the crisis can be difficult to find. There's a need to listen to the people most impacted and report on their stories, perspectives, and ideas, in order find solutions. Your Voice Ohio, a journalism collaborative, seeks to focus on the information needs of communities, share collective knowledge and resources across newsrooms, and create more representative coverage.

To accomplish this goal, we worked with competing newsrooms to create the Your Voice Mid-Ohio Valley partnership. Journalists from Clutch MOV online news, the Marietta Times, Newstalk 910 WLTP, the Ohio Valley ReSource National Public Radio collaborative, Parkersburg News and Sentinel, WOUB public radio at Ohio University, WMOA, WTAP-TV, and WPKM all committed to working together to listen to stories and answer questions of those experiencing addiction.

In July 2018, the collaborative hosted 3 discussions in the Mid-Ohio Valley and met with members of their community face-to-face. Our second event in Belpre drew a group of 35 people, comprised of doctors, business people, volunteers, residents, and people in recovery who recognized how the crisis affects absolutely everyone in the community. While many of the attendees had not personally experienced addiction, they wanted to increase their personal understanding of the crisis.

People discussed the financial and emotional cost to community services, particularly first responders, hospital emergency rooms, and social services. When thinking about solutions the community could take, they wanted to see an increase in early education techniques, not limited to substance use education, but focused on coping skills that could help children deal with trauma so they don't turn to drugs. They also wanted to make information about recovery resources more available to people affected by addiction, for both substance users themselves and their families.

Traditional journalism, too often, prioritizes weekly overdose statistics, and doesn't provide information to help communities actively find and adopt solutions. Our goal, through these community conversations, is to supply people with the information and resources they need to confront the addiction crisis.

# EVENT SUMMARY

On July 16, 2018, around 35 community members in Belpre gathered at the local Masonic lodge, and over the course of 2 hours, shared their experiences with addiction and identified possible local solutions.

We asked these three questions to prompt the discussion:

- 1. What does addiction look like in our community?**
- 2. What do you see as causes of the addiction crisis here?**
- 3. What steps might we take to combat the addiction crisis?**

The conversation generated important questions for the local media to explore. In the following pages, you'll find the ideas, personal stories, and solutions to the crisis written by the participants during the event.

This event and others in the Mid-Ohio Valley were arranged and supported by What's Next MOV, Sisters Health Foundation, and Community Recovery Center.



# RESPONSES

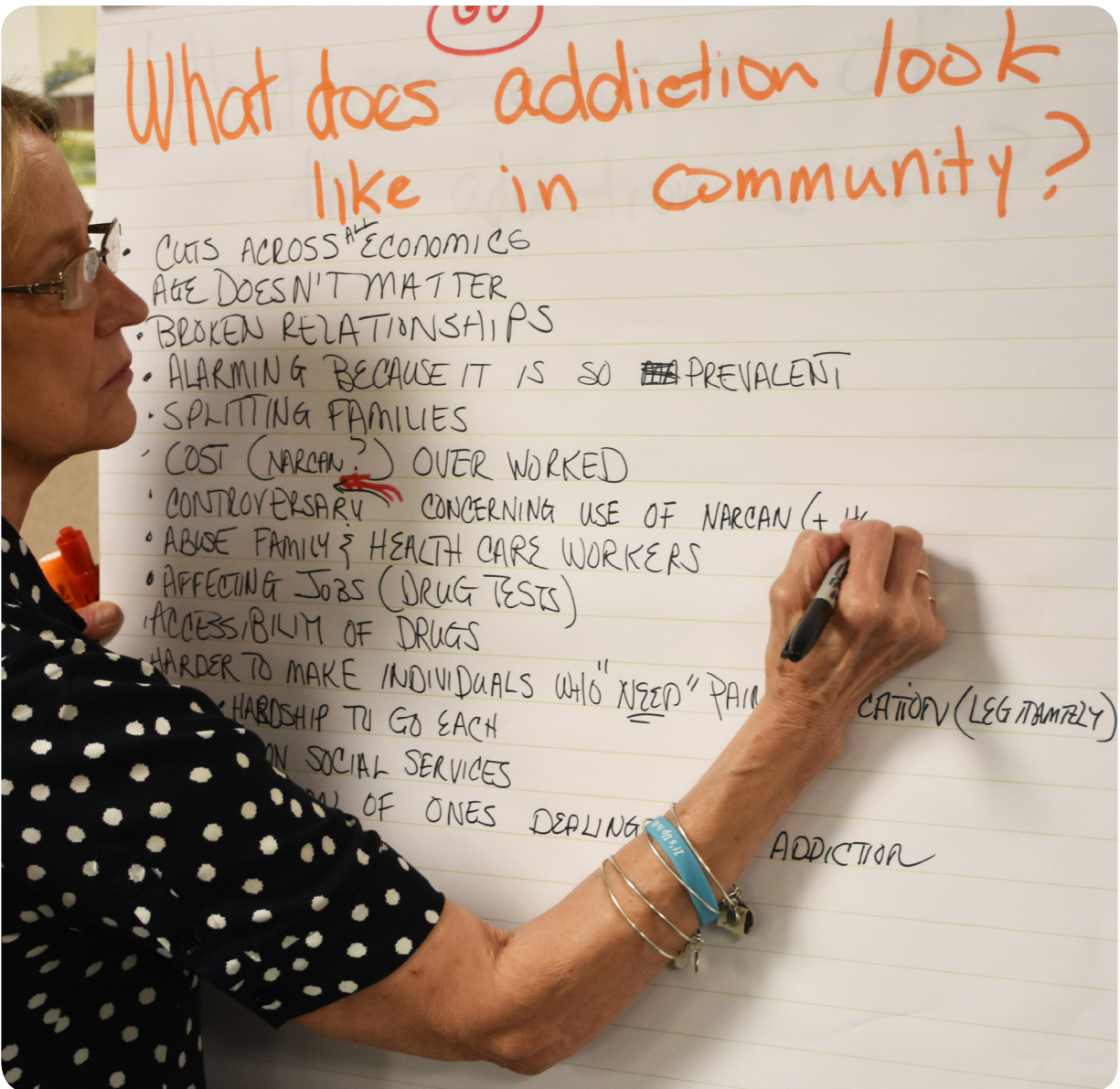
## WHAT DOES ADDICTION LOOK LIKE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

- » Addiction effects everyone regardless of your age, race, sex, social status
- » It is a destroyer of families, friends, careers
- » Causes disease, homelessness, hopelessness, high crime rates, depression suicide
- » Alarming
- » Hopeless
- » Awareness
- » People losing lives
- » People losing families
- » Communities losing structure
- » Children losing their way
- » Lack of understanding
- » Morality based addiction thinking
- » People overdosing and losing their freedom and lives
- » More and more homeless people
- » Not enough treatment centers
- » A ugly disease
- » Affects people's appearance
- » People running around dirty and leaving their kids alone with no one watching them and being homeless
- » Not caring about what they look like or how badly they treat people that care about them and want to help out with addiction
- » Deteriorating neighborhoods
- » Families in turmoil
- » Dark cloud
- » My neighbor, my students in school, adult professionals, parents, children, grandchildren, people in our church. No specific profile
- » A veil over their eyes of the community. We need to identify the source of the pain, discover why people reach out for relief. Solve the pain, solve the problem
- » All ages from young to senior are effected
- » All economic and education backgrounds
- » Not gender related

- » All areas and neighborhoods
- » Young and old
- » Rich and poor knows no boundaries
- » Mother/father/child
- » Anyone – young/old/rich/poor
- » Homeless
- » Employed
- » Male > female
- » 30-55
- » Thin
- » Loose group affiliation
- » Mobile
- » Beyond opioids
- » All social/work classes
- » Impact
- » Professionals
- » Lost souls
- » Multigenerational workforce develop/impact
- » Family impact
- » Defeat
- » Poverty
- » Broken families
- » Law breakers
- » Black holes
- » Depression
- » Sadness
- » Struggles
- » Hurt/death
- » Family separations
- » Unemployment
- » Conflict
- » Denial
- » Loss of relationships

- » Hopelessness
- » Kids below 10 living with grandparents because their parents are using/in rehab
- » Kids acting out and now knowing how to cope with everyday stressors in school life
- » Jobs lost, missed
- » Foster care
- » Death
- » Incarcerated (parents & other)
- » Unemployment
- » Homelessness
- » “Normal”
- » Theft
- » Difficulty accessing medication for general population (insurance hoops)
- » Addiction crisis makes it harder for people to get medication for legitimate medical needs
- » Divided – many people think it’s not their problem
- » Not enough workers for volunteering
- » Gangs of people hanging around
- » People using drugs or getting a lot of over the counter medicine
- » Loss work time
- » Breakdown of nuclear family
- » Poor life choices
- » Overdoses on regular basis
- » Negative influences from outside the community
- » Expanded municipal/county barriers
- » Violence that goes with addiction
- » It can look like anyone
- » Crime areas
- » Homelessness
- » Aimlessness
- » Family abuse
- » Unemployment
- » Unhealthy people
- » Sadness
- » Rundown neighborhoods

- » People out at night
- » Less people at church
- » Less volunteering
- » Never-ending spiral



## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS CAUSES OF THE ADDICTION CRISIS HERE?

- » Lack of faith
- » Easy escape from reality
- » Lack of insight
- » No organization willing to start
- » Ignorance
- » Lack of organization as groups begin to come together
- » Fast paced life styles
- » Heredity – it's a disease
- » Breakdown of family support over many years. Who is noticing when kids start to go astray?
- » Drug companies flooding air waves wanting people to use drugs. Work through doctors to sell the products
- » Unemployment, depression, boredom, easily accessible
- » Low economics
- » Looking for something to fill a void only God can fill
- » Socio-economic stratification
- » Breakdown of community values: Church. Fraternal/society: Masons and Rotary
- » Increased opioid presence
- » Bombarding of technology and lack of people skills
- » Disintegration of families – divorce, 1 parent homes
- » Lack of structure
- » Lack of morals
- » Peer pressure
- » Lift the veil. Laws in 1920's – free divorce. Recently – Obamacare. Follow the money. Who's buying drugs for broke people? Drug laws – not illegal till the 20's. Heroin – open borders
- » Mental health
- » Lack of self respect
- » Abusive relationships
- » Anxiety
- » Self-medicating
- » Peer pressure
- » Hopelessness
- » Lifestyle [adrenaline]
- » Self medication: needing more or different



- » Persona
- » “Normal”
- » Ease of access
- » Too difficult to get treatment (expensive)
- » Lack of proper parenting because of a lack of decent paying jobs. Both parents have to work in order to support the family and families aren't spending quality time together, eating dinner together. Peers and the internet are raising the kids
- » Being born into it, both parents using at a young age
- » Kids thinking it's cool to do and be around
- » Not knowing enough about it at a young age
- » Groups of people trying drugs together – goes from one group to another
- » Availability of drugs in community, easy access
- » Being done
- » Being homeless
- » Drop out of school
- » Wrong by family
- » Being picked on
- » Can't get a job
- » Child abuse
- » Death of mom and dad
- » No one caring
- » Being lonely
- » Heartbroken
- » Lack of coping skills
- » Boredom
- » Easy access
- » Peer pressure
- » Mental illness
- » ACES [Adverse Childhood Experiences Study]
- » Trauma
- » Abusive household
- » Easy access to drugs (illegal and prescribed)
- » Boredom

- » Rebellion, challenging authority
- » Wide availability of drugs
- » Insufficient number of treatment facilities
- » Previous education effects have been lacking
- » Self esteem
- » Sense of belonging
- » Unable to meet basic needs
- » Hopelessness
- » Thrill seeking
- » Education at early age
- » Genetic predisposition
- » Self discipline
- » Peer pressure
- » Genetics
- » Broken homes
- » Money issues
- » Health related
- » Boredom
- » Hopelessness
- » Failure to consider consequences
- » Relative affordability
- » Lax regulation on script writing
- » Easy access to US market for Mexican producers
- » Isolation (lack of community)
- » Mindset (pain = evil)
- » Easy access
- » Community/family lack of supports
- » Pharma companies pushing opioids
- » Lack of education
- » Waiting lists for rehab
- » Lack of LT [long term] aftercare and follow-up
- » Unmet needs
- » Peer pressure

- » Overmedication
- » Easy accessibility = more drugs which means more addiction, harder accessibility means less drugs
- » Mom using it = baby is addicted
- » Addiction – predisposition – disease process
- » Economics
- » Hopelessness
- » Access
- » Attitude/acceptance
- » Medic/dental
- » Regulating profit



## WHAT STEPS MIGHT WE TAKE TO COMBAT THE ADDICTION CRISIS?

- » Educate that addiction is a disease. Find out who is especially susceptible. Teach them about their triggers
- » Decriminalize addiction. Put \$\$ into treatment or recovery
- » Make communities supportive of recovery
- » Youth programs
- » Family programs
- » Support for all affected
- » Drug court
- » Better sense of community
- » More treatment centers
- » Better justice system
- » Learning more about addiction
- » Cannot lock up addiction to solve it
- » Support systems available 24/7
- » Coping skills [education]
- » Incentive
- » Reduce stigma
- » Employment opportunities
- » Support from education, rehabilitation
- » More early-on education about the dangers of drugs
- » Positive role models like more boys and girls clubs/big brothers and sisters
- » Opening a needle exchange
- » More detox/rehabs/12 step programs
- » Free information on available services
- » Anonymous hotlines
- » Parental informational packages
- » Increased funding by health care insurance
- » Report suspicious activity
- » More rehabs
- » Preventive measures in schools
- » War on drugs
- » Act as responsible citizen around younger children. No drinking, taking pills
- » Random drug testing

- » Stricter laws
- » Provide more parent and kid meetings
- » Harder accessibility
- » Teach this in 3rd – 4th grade level rather than 7th-8th and in 9th
- » More activities for our youth
- » When released from prison make it easier to get employment
- » Understanding from people who have not experienced
- » Drug rehab cause there needs to be more going to church
- » Speak in schools
- » Counseling
- » Getting a higher power
- » NA meetings
- » Help the homeless
- » Mentorship in schools [as early as possible]
- » Connect the elderly in the workforce to shadow those with addiction
- » Teach coping skills
- » More/better/less \$\$ treatment centers
- » EFFECTIVE education: neo-natal, early childhood, adult, meditation/yoga
- » Connect elderly as mentors
- » Step up with prevention at younger age
- » Support parents, especially mothers who are pregnant
- » Verification on Rx
- » Have trauma-informed care at schools
- » Have jobs for recovery addicts to feel part of community
- » Transportation – free/cheap
- » School based: concise education programs, random [secret?] drug screens
- » Continue community outreach: announce norms, not = with drug culture
- » Appropriate therapy for in-patient, out-patient, ongoing
- » Increased economic options. Increased middle class
- » Broad education in school, business, med. community, churches, community clubs/groups
- » Commitment to long-term funding for treatments and follow-up care
- » Empathy to action
- » More rehabs

- » Education
- » Tolerance
- » More prayer [Jesus]
- » Neighborhood watch. Encourage, by neighborhood, groups which communicate issues to law enforcement, health professionals. Increasing their awareness of activities within their neighborhood
- » Stricter laws
- » Addiction clinics [local]. More accessible. More student related – anti-drug
- » Educate children starting in kindergarten
- » Educate families organizations like Celebrate Recovery and Courage to Change
- » Make aware of resources available in our area
- » End easy divorce!
- » Close the borders!
- » BUILD THE WALL
- » Time limits on opioids
- » Legalize all drugs
- » Treat as medical issue
- » Media must push this agenda!!



# QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Using attendee input, here are the questions and ideas Your Voice Mid-Ohio Valley journalists are setting out to explore and answer:

- How many relapses might a person in recovery have in a year?
- What is the number of people who relapse annually?
- What is the first step to help?
- What does research show about the people most likely to face addiction?
- No one likes conflict. So what is media gonna push differently? Will you push for stricter divorce laws?
- How can I help?
- How does the culture and community change and move toward rehabilitation rather than criminalization of addiction?
- Why won't Wood County start a needle exchange program?
- How much does the all-powerful big Pharma affect our life?
- How do you get someone to want help?
- Can we get rid of the opiate crisis?
- Where can we find more funding?
- How can we do better at re-entry programs for felons?
- Why is addiction so hooking?

# LOCAL MEDIA PARTNERS



CLUTCH MOV  
@CLUTCHMOV  
CLUTCHMOV@GMAIL.COM

Clutch MOV is a free, online publication that delivers coverage of the Mid-Ohio Valley's culture and local flavor through the eyes of young professionals.

## The Marietta Times

THE MARIETTA TIMES  
@MARIETTATIMES  
NEWS@MARIETTATIMES.COM

The Columbus Dispatch is a daily newspaper based in Marietta, Ohio.



NEWS RADIO 910 WLTP  
@WLTPAM910  
TALK@WLTP.COM

Newstalk 910 WLTP is a radio station in Parkersburg, West Virginia.



OHIO VALLEY RESOURCE  
@OVRESRC  
OHIOVALLEYRESOURCE.ORG

The Ohio Valley ReSource is a regional journalism collaborative reporting on economic and social change in Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia.

## The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

PARKERSBURG NEWS AND SENTINEL  
@NEWSANDSENTINEL  
NEWSANDSENTINEL.COM

The Parkersburg News and Sentinel is the primary newspaper in Parkersburg, West Virginia





WOUB PUBLIC MEDIA  
@WOUB  
NEWS@WOUB.ORG

WOUB is a public radio station in Athens, Ohio, broadcast out of Ohio University.



LOCAL RADIO WMOA  
@WMOA1490  
INFO@WMOA1490.COM

WMOA is a radio station in Marietta, Ohio.



WTAP-TV  
@WTAPTELEVISION  
THENEWSCENTER.TV

WTAP-TV is the NBC-affiliated television station for the Mid-Ohio Valley that is licensed to Parkersburg, West Virginia.



WPKM  
@WPKM963  
WPKM@WVUP.EDU

WPKM is the college radio station of West Virginia University-Parkersburg.

# NEXT STEPS

Reporters across these organizations are dividing up the questions now and reporting answers back to the community.

**For up-to-date information and reporting, visit:**

**[YOURVOICEOHIO.ORG](http://YOURVOICEOHIO.ORG)**

**[@YOURVOICEOHIO](https://twitter.com/YOURVOICEOHIO)**

