

# Your Voice Mid-Ohio Valley: Marietta

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 final event in Marietta drew almost 60 people, including local judges, candidates, probation officers, lawyers, people in recovery and their families, teachers, and medical professionals. One woman in recovery spoke face-to-face with a Washington County common pleas judge about the need for recovery specialists to work alongside members of the drug court. Another expressed concern about her inability to support her son as he returned from prison—who was available to help him stay away from drugs, establish relationships and find work? Echoing her sentiment, several people identified with the struggle to find work with a non-violent felony in their past.

Attendees also wanted to see substance abuse education at an early age. One healthcare professional noted that in Marietta, the age of first use is 13-14. Initiatives to increase this statistic, even if only by a few years, could significantly reduce the risk of long-term addiction for youth.

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 17, 2018, almost 60 community members in Marietta gathered at the Washington County Fairgrounds Clubhouse, 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?

- » It looks hidden
- » Overdose deaths; overdose ambulance runs; crime to support habits; family stress/distress; employer stress; higher appropriations of dollars from federal, state local taxes; unemployability of addicts due to drug use and crime; lawsuits against opioid suppliers that cause higher prices for all medicines; schools in stress
- » Touches many families which in turn affects the community at large
- » It looks like families being torn apart and being affected for generations, negatively impacted
- » Addiction is prevalent in this community; addiction is an equal opportunity employer; in four days have seen 115 patients with opioid use disorder
- » Kindergarten kids not ready for school because parents can't focus on kids needs; foster care placements; parent support group formed for those with adult children who are addicted; employers can't find workers who can pass drug screening; pain, control; stigma; TV drug adv.; brain changes
- » Everywhere; empty entry-level jobs; stressed helpless hopeless parents and workers; scared older people and business owners from theft
- » Children – affects grades; industry; families divided – ripple effect
- » Heart break; sorrow; sadness; grandparents raising children
- » Addiction doesn't care what race you are, how much money you have or where you live. It is all over.
- » Increased crime; family issues/confrontation; dirty needles and increased hepatitis exposure; overuse of emergency rooms; jail vs rehab; harm to children due to high parents; limited hires
- » Mom, dad, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, neighbor. Addiction does not discriminate. Empty promises. Community does not acknowledge or accept even when in recovery.
- » Sons, families, anyone can is affected by addiction; hopeless; desperate; shame
- » Broken family; wasted potential; financial devastation; lack of jobs for 16-30 year olds; addicted to drug treatments?
- » Moms, dads, grandmas, grampas, sons, daughters; wasted opportunities; excuses; lying; lying by omission; deception; deception of oneself; theft; distrust; missing out on daily joys; neglect; abuse; children raising self – lack skills; lack of jobs and opportunities for 16-40 year-olds; lack of community support; stresses on first responders and community systems; age of first use 13-14
- » There is not a demographic that is immune to it; people are filling a void with a substance; it looks like despair, hopelessness, defeated; looked down on by others; stigma; loss of trust; in ability to stop; social media disputes over Narcan
- » Complex problem; children with incarcerated parents; children experiencing trauma; lack of wrap-around services for people to re-enter the community; stigma – not seen as a chronic disease
- » Addiction presents itself in various ways, often times doesn't show at all. It's possible there are addicts in the room, not showing any indication. In the community, addiction presents itself in the courts. Every day, addicts are brought before the court. Most of the time this isn't their first time.

- » It creates isolation for user, their families and friends; it reinforces the powerlessness for everyone involved; it leads to lost experiences, relationships, opportunities and development
- » Cuts across all generational boundaries – impact and addiction; cuts across all socio-economic groups; economic costs; destructive to family relationships; impact on job creation; strain on services – medical, social and more.
- » Overdoses in parking lots and public bathrooms; overloaded court dockets; nightly traffic across the street from my house; broken families and children left locked in bedrooms or witnessing parents overdosed on the way home from working; blighted properties and landlords profiting off the poverty
- » Addiction looks like me, my family, my friends, their children. It has no boundaries, knows no boundaries..
- » Joblessness, homelessness, family deterioration, low level petty crimes, on-street drug trading
- » Lost work time; physical/mental abuse; broken families; labor shortage; regular overdoses; growing city/county budgets; overtaxes police and EMS
- » Parents not properly caring for children; incarceration; run down houses; stretched community resources; unemployment;
- » Anyone. No one is immune; kids missing school, dealing with more than they should have to; mental health needs; broken families – not sure what to do; desperation, crime; can often look hopeless
- » It looks different as it works in different people; something I think I'm seeing with regularity is a thread of diminished hope. I'm only going on what people have reported to me but I often hear stories that describe a sense of ending up in addiction because some other choice wouldn't work out.
- » Children going hungry; people living out of backpacks; desperation; poor mental health; hopelessness; poor, rich all encompassing; homeless people; few answers; grandparents raising children; children raising themselves; children caring for parents
- » Broken families; an acceptance of lifestyles being normal that are not normal
- » Everywhere – open your eyes; hopeless, heartbreak, broken dreams, no help until they want help.
- » Addiction affects all walks of life, either directly or indirectly. Poor, middle class, upper class. Everyone is affected.
- » Despair , poverty, illness, homelessness, hopelessness, dangerous situation, absent parents
- » Looks like the ordinary person, intersects all walks of life. Moms, dads, young, old, your neighbor, it's part of your work environment, it's a part of your social circles, it's in your church.
- » The every day person. Smiling faces, firm handshake and lost eyes
- » Crosses all socio-economic lines, affects all levels of society – nurses, less affluent, professionals, lower income, race; takes money from family and affects all family members; job loss due to incarceration or being in treatment
- » Increased crime; sometimes it doesn't look different; changing the health community; leading to increased innovation in health care community
- » Addiction is in every neighborhood, income level; hard on children/family members; doesn't look the same everywhere, not always easy to see.
- » Broken families; lost potential of young people; overdose deaths; lost work days, productivity, poorer community; loss of trust.
- » Addiction looks like people in our neighborhood. They are on the streets, they look dirty, and they appear in need.
- » Not enough jobs and activities for 16-30 year olds to keep busy and have satisfying uses of their time.

- » From reading crime reports in both local papers, I see a lot of arrests for distribution of drugs of all kinds, plus using, overdoses and DOA. I see it as bad socially since I grew up not hearing about drugs, or knowing anything about them, in the 1940s and 50s
- » It affects everyone whether they know it or not; my older son went to his buddy's father's funeral when they were in the 5th grade; My family's business was scammed out of \$3,000-\$5,000 by an addict employee and lost another employee to the courts. My 5-year-old spent the summer watching us clean out two apartments rented by addicts. One died and one was hospitalized never to return; this is why it's harder to obtain certain drugs legally; it's why schools are finding fewer children kindergarten-ready
- » Crime, police reports; neglected children; people wandering around aimlessly
- » Young, old, all ages and families and children; first responders
- » Neglected children; absent parents; grandparents raising grand kids; overwhelmed children's services and foster care system; kids losing not only parents but also relatives, friends and faith in the community
- » Not really sure, spent the last 10 years in Maine in a community catapulted into addiction in the last decade; Much the same trajectory that I watched/covered here in Marietta as a reporter in the 2000s; Same as Marietta, took a couple prominent deaths because people more willing to take notice; key advocates are parents willing to speak out. Until then it was an us vs them problem.
- » Police and courts and sheriff try but cannot make a significant dent in the problem; the war on drugs does not work – we need a different approach; too many people die. Too many family members die; prison and jail make getting employment impossible and without hope addicted people have an even more difficult time.
- » All of us – no socioeconomic boundaries; we all have a role in making our community a better, safer place; homelessness; displaced children/families; hopelessness; lack of knowledge about good things happening in our community and how to access them
- » You and me, employed and unemployed; motherless and fatherless children; liars
- » Addiction doesn't discriminate. It has touched every family. It causes chaos. More funerals, overflowing hospitals, jails, unemployment and welfare lines
- » Good people who are lost, broken, hopeless, in and out of jail with not enough resources to get help; chaotic; dysfunctional; lonely
- » Generational; higher unemployment; breakdown of families
- » Overwhelming; overarching with many young and old; limited opportunities; community doesn't recognize needs of recovering addict
- » Arrests, incarceration; crowded jails; overdoses, medical emergencies; family problems, children without parents; treatment programs, recovery groups; employment problems, unfilled positions



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

- » Hollywood and entertainment industry made money making drugs and addiction a joke
- » Prescriptions, crowd (friends); despair; genetic predisposition
- » Spiritual poverty; mental illness; physical illness; lack of resources; lack of human connection; treating symptoms and not the causes; looking at parts not the whole; fractured society
- » Spiritual poverty; lack of alternatives; physical injury; job loss; egomaniacs with an inferiority complex; unwillingness to accept pain; age of first use 13/14
- » Over-prescription of opioids for years; workers with inadequate access to healthcare and sustainable wellness; greed from drug companies; lack of physician education and understanding; breakdowns in the community connection and social fabric; lack of mental and emotional health care; economics; fear of pain (Physical and emotional)
- » Joblessness/underemployment; over reliance on post-operative or emergency medication; easily available illicit drugs; no continuity of care – criminalization instead of treatment
- » Medical problem; lack of education on the dangers; lack of jobs; lack of hope; hereditary; lack of activities; medical/dental; access to supply
- » Kids have less opportunities than their parents for jobs, homes etc; more dangers around
- » Using drugs before 18; using drugs when pregnant brings addicted babies; easy accessibility
- » Lack of prospects: jobs and education; peer pressure; bored; self medication
- » Genetics; poor mental health; poor self image; prescription drugs; stress related to economy; dealing with any kind of stress; casual use turning into addiction; needing to feel accepted
- » Availability of drugs; lack of self-confidence; trying to fill a void
- » Lack of coping skills; lack of support system; ACES triggers
- » Trauma; sexual abuse, molestation; hereditary genetic component; Grew up in house where substance abuse is prevalent and not stable; accidents – pain; co-occurring disasters
- » Enabling family/friends; socio-economic conditions; lack of consequences
- » Unrecognized addictive qualities of substances. People think it can happen to other people but not them; changing norms of society
- » Mental illness; hopelessness; peer pressure
- » Hopelessness – not seeing any other way out, especially kids; lack of resources but not always – teens telling me it was easier to get pills/pot at school than it was for them to get to school – able to get it from bathroom medicine cabinet
- » Generational; lack of consequences; lack of resources at the beginning
- » Seeing it at young age, working parents, friends get involved; peer pressure; experimentation
- » Your choices
- » Life
- » No easy answer/brokenness
- » Lack of conversations and answers

- » I feel like my perspective on this is narrow. Lack of jobs; neglect; abuse; but it seems like a lot of people tell me about choice; can't cope; can't deal with pain; avoidance; escape
- » Fear of pain -- physical and emotional; body not meant to live without pain – how we know when something is wrong; disconnection from community; lack of empathy for what our neighbors are going through; fear
- » Boredom; depression; no good alternative pain killers; unwillingness by some patients to accept any pain
- » Lack of treatment for mental health issues; easy access; easy money; vulnerable population for exploitation
- » Drugs are too easy to get; too many people are willing and able to sell and distribute for a big profit; too many people of all ages and walks of life who believe they need drugs as a crutch; lack of tolerance to drugs
- » Many many causes – poverty, hopelessness, crossing over the line with prescription medicines
- » Misuse of legal drugs; use of illegal drugs; self-medication due to inadequate access to medical care; lack of community knowledge and understanding of addiction and treatment
- » Hopelessness; boredom; easy/cheap drugs; easy access to the market for producers; generational momentum; emotional-physical abuse; pain equals evil; notion of manageability; pharma commercials
- » Genetic predisposition; strength of opioids; self treating psychological issues; inadequately treating depression, anxiety and physical pain; access to opioids
- » Physicians; pain management; hospitals; drug companies; lack of parental guidance; lack of education
- » Pill mills; over prescribing; medicine commercials
- » Over prescription of pain pills; no memory of what heroin/opioids to people, willing to try it; access; lack of hope for a productive, interesting life
- » Lack of education; socially acceptable; hereditary; spiritual hole; trauma; feeling of not belonging
- » Some feel so hopeless and beat down they use; friends encourage use; some have underlying depression and anxiety issues, PTSD
- » Personal need – spiritual and mental needs not met; addiction prone; separate the cause from the things that aid addiction
- » Medical practice – prescriptions lack of positive/productive opportunities for youth; peer pressure; stigma
- » Relying on addictive meds to treat pain instead of other options; lack of treatment or the wrong treatment; other mental health or physical issues
- » Adverse childhood experiences; trauma; access; lack of education; chemical alteration of the brain; family history; normalized; belonging; 75 percent through illegal drugs; helplessness brokenness; crack is back
- » Lack of jobs; no role models for youth; generational; quick way to make money; limited life expectations
- » Lack of information; patient request for pain-killing drugs; confusion about emotional and physical pain, mental health mistreated
- » Human nature – seeking pleasure; self medicating for mental health and other problems; modeling/seeing it as normal; trying to fit in; prescription drugs; genetic predisposition
- » Brain chemistry; mental illness – self medicating; peer pressure; alone; family history
- » Mental illness; self control; genetics/family history' peer pressure
- » Jobs; no supports – family, church; the only friends are drug friends; a hole in your life



- » Early trauma; lack of connection to family, friends, community; early drug use; lack of opportunity; access to information through the internet; go back to a front porch community – knowing your neighbors, investment in community activities
- » More broken families; availability of opioids; self respect – taking responsibilities
- » Misperception of the causes of addiction; overprescription
- » Lack of family; Godlessness – no God; lack of understanding, hopelessness; quick physical addiction; kids are fearless; peer pressure; doctors don't understand
- » Physicians required to prescribe narcotics when made; appointments limited to 15 minutes
- » Emphasis on academic and athletic acumen for success feeds feeling of failure if not achieved; cant instill self-worth, must be commercial effort; inadequate education of stress/pain relief options
- » Hopelessness; wanting to escape whatever dealing with; mental health conditions that have gone untreated; easy access to drugs
- » Over prescription; mental illness; depressed economy; lack of personal responsibility; easy access to drugs
- » Poverty; criminal record; injury; depression; relationships
- » Over prescription; lack of education about drugs at young age; breakdown of families; need Jesus in our lives; drug companies
- » Lack of family education; easily available; more focused on drug dealer instead of helping dealer that is also an addict; trying to incarcerate our way out; lack of open mindedness; lack of understanding from community



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

- » Build social networks for kids and also for adults in recovery; access to holistic health and wellness support services; access to jobs during recovery; youth programs – Rebound, MOV etc
- » MOV Rebound for kids; build supports that are easy to find, no questions asked; Recovery housing, transition places from jail; train non professionals to support recover
- » Treat people as whole instead of parts; Kids involved
- » Review Project Lazarus; Drug coalition non-profit; evidence-based curriculum in school and colleges regarding substance abuse; activities for youth with a trusted adult for low or no money; recruitment of quality providers; improved policies in schools regarding drugs
- » Remove stigma; more treatment options; reform expungement laws; offer more wrap around services; evidence-based education and prevention programs in school
- » Quick-response treatment resources; needle exchange programs; treatment evaluations; insurance cover non-opioid pain treatment; better interstate communication between authorities, medical communities and recovery experts
- » Nationwide programs teaching compassion; Addressing the broken health care system; extensive collaboration among health care workers, schools and organizations; holistic health models; training
- » Youth programs; more and better rehab; better county support; drug court; better community involvement; border problem, pill culture
- » Education to combat stigma; state funding; access to services' more productive opportunities for youth
- » Education for youth, families and communities
- » Community partnership for protecting children; needle exchange; easy access to help, support; drug court; same message among all agencies
- » Education and support in the school system; support for families
- » Law enforcement; recovery (spiritual component); prevention – right path – DARE program; must involve churches – Hope-God-Jobs; community partnership for protecting children; traditional recovery paired with spiritual counseling
- » Need to address two different populations: 1. Prior to use, need to find something that is substitute to drug use and incompatible to drug use; known addicts, need to enroll in program that includes medically assisted therapy, social therapy, and 12 steps programs
- » Give hope to the user, restrict the cash cow
- » More mentors; more after-school programs; more funding for crisis and rehab services; more wrap-around services for families; community partnerships for protecting children/bring national programs
- » Prevention programs, increase treatment capacity; remove barriers to treatment; promote treatment services
- » Treatment option rather than jail; more support, especially from addicts in recovery
- » Counseling, rehab, drug assisted withdrawal, evidence-based education, group support – families and friends.
- » Early family and child intervention; better/quicker availability of long-term treatment; multi-disciplinary treatment clinics; sentencing to treatment from drug courts
- » Resources; training; help educators and non-profits; expand treatment options

- » Consequences – be open and honest; increase support, mental health; increase education; resources and training; increase mental health service in school; continuity of care, coping skills, mindfulness; multidisciplinary approach
- » Musicians [part of the cause, should be part of the solution]; punishment fit the crime; drug companies
- » Multifaceted solutions; project Lazarus
- » Treatment is treating only the casualties, not the solution. Takes community members working together. Make treatment more accessible, easier to obtain
- » I'm a believer in developing relationship outside our normal circle of peers, show us other choices; mentoring; playground program
- » Access to addiction treatment; central repository of treatment numbers, one phone number; treatment and support for those in recovery
- » Crisis response team; forced rehab
- » Education training; treatment; money; support; change of attitude
- » Better or more treatment; better education
- » Provide support at young age; educate beginning at young age; improve treatment options
- » Change the perception of addiction; community acceptance of addiction recovery
- » Early mentoring; explore opportunities early
- » Media: investigative reporting on evidence-based prevention, intervention, treatment and recover processes to combat public lack of authoritative knowledge and understanding of the problem and solutions; This 2-hour community meeting is a good start but it should just be the beginning of media involvement; Example: Public is misinformed about solutions and its role in treatment
- » Eliminate some stressors – better wages, housing, food assistance; provide inpatient treatment options; Detox: Suboxone treatment plans that have a time limit, weaning off; Better drug testing for those on suboxone, addicts are using other drugs in that program; drug courts: optional treatment; free help; free mental health counseling
- » If a citizen young or old has a serious problem and they want help, they get on a list, we'll call you in about 6 months or so: What options are available now other than just go to police
- » Implement evidence-based addiction education and prevention programming in school
- » More research into non-opioid plain treatment



# QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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

- Why do media not do enough investigative reporting on evidence-based prevention, intervention treatment and recovery to combat public misinformation and misunderstanding of the problems and solutions?
- How can we provide a navigation system for those seeking help to get off drugs? In other words, which companies or agencies do what?
- Does commercialism have something to do with the crisis? Although all could not make this choice, could fewer parents work so they can stay home with their children and attend to their needs?
- Why can't more money be committed to treatment for both substance abuse and mental health?
- What efforts are available that are focused on helping build social support for people in recovery?
- How can my church help families/kid in recovery?
- Can the media who are involved in this program advertise the recovery services available to the community?
- When are the recovered addicts going to be in charge of this type of meeting?
- Is there a one-stop shop for those in Washington County who are ready for treatment?
- What is the statute for expunging a felony drug charge conviction in Ohio? This is a stressor for a lifetime and contributes to relapse.
- How can we work on the causes of addiction rather than the treatment of casualties?
- I would like to understand more the link between the brain and spirituality and addiction.
- Who wants to collaborate to fight opioid addiction?
- How can we bring everyone?
- How can organizations be enrolled in a system to obtain referrals for those who need help?
- What is fentanyl, why is it in heroin, how do we get it out of heroin.
- What is the best forum for education on this issue? Schools? Churches? TV? Community events? Films?
- What more can I do?
- What has led people who are addicted into recovery?

# 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 DIGITAL  

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)**

