

Your Voice Mid-Ohio Valley: Parkersburg

**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. The first event in Parkersburg drew about 50 people, half of which were in recovery. One community organizer remarked there was a feeling of being heard and respected—which can be rare for people who have struggled with substance use. Many attendees agreed that addiction has completely changed the town they remembered growing up in, especially as jobs became harder to find and pills were easy to come by. Their pain, loss, and sense of hopelessness became a money-making industry, and once trapped in that cycle, it became hard to get out. When asked to consider local ways to address these issues, they wanted to see drug use treated as an illness rather than a crime, and more reporting on the success stories of people in recovery.

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 15, 2018, around 50 community members in Parkersburg gathered at the Boys & Girls Club, 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?

- » DUI in police report
- » Everyone getting into the act
- » Addiction a commodity – it's a business
- » Stigmatizes our state and Appalachia
- » Youth “unparented”/raising themselves
- » Youth divided from family [by death, Prison, CPS]
- » Grandparents/great-grandparents raising kids
- » Addiction look like anyone and everyone
- » People that are overdosing, drunk driving. I have friends that have lost parents to overdose. I have friends who smoke, vape, dip and chew
- » Looks like people in pain, tears
- » Anyone can be a addict and your never who or when you could get hit with addiction
- » Addiction looks like your neighbors, nurses, doctors, lawyers, etc...
- » It's bad cause people are running the streets, dirty and living on the streets and don't care about doing the things and living there.
- » Needles and spoons all over and its not good for kid cause they can pick them up and it can make them sick and can cause a lot of harm to people that don't do drugs.
- » It's a terrible plague, which affects us all. No matter your race, sex, or religious beliefs, social status, destroys marriages, families, lives. Addiction knows no boundaries. Addiction takes so much from us not just our families, jobs, homes, dignity, self-respect and lives.
- » Addiction looks like you or I: a doctor, nurse, lawyer. It doesn't discriminate against anyone!
- » Crime
- » Homelessness
- » Ran down community
- » Children with no parents
- » People who are broken inside and out.
- » With that being said, we need others to understand this disease and help. No discrimination
- » Broken lives walking down the street
- » Backpacks – are they meth or legit
- » Hopelessness & lack of motivation
- » Trauma ~ stress

- » Homelessness
- » Illness
- » Illness not addressed in past or present
- » Addiction in our community looks like: students telling me their mom's best friend OD'd on heroine, seeing a student's parent's name in the paper as part of a drug bust. Seeing students leave one school for another and another and another due to adults addiction
- » Negative appearance. People with low self-esteem who have no where to turn. Run down neighborhoods with drug activity and crime. Burdens law enforcement, Social Workers, teachers, mental health workers, medical personnel
- » It can look like anyone, across all socioeconomic boundaries. It can be someone who is "wiggled" out.
- » It can be someone who is well educated and well articulate
- » Addiction can look very dirty empty and horrible. From being homeless and living on the streets to coming from a wealthy, living family. It absolutely does not discriminate. It can touch the lives of absolutely any. Does not matter
- » Broken families
- » Overdoses
- » Trauma
- » Homelessness
- » Sad kids
- » Broken homes
- » Poverty
- » Destroying
- » Foster care overload
- » People on the streets
- » Family abuse
- » No pride
- » Increased crime
- » Overcrowded jails
- » Broken families
- » Arrests
- » Overdoses
- » Homelessness
- » No pride/loss of pride
- » Overcrowded jails, crime, arrests
- » Homelessness
- » Poverty

- » Foster care overload
- » People on the street “aimlessly”
- » Family abuse
- » No pride
- » Overcrowded jails
- » Crime
- » Unemployment
- » Sad kids
- » Broken homes
- » Sad/broken
- » Trash/homeless
- » Deaths
- » No pride
- » Crimes/jails overcrowded
- » Broken families
- » Loss of children
- » It’s taking control
- » Destroying everything in its path
- » People afraid to help
- » Police overloaded & foster family needed
- » Fear in neighborhoods for children
- » Destroyed families
- » Rundown properties
- » Health problems uncared for kids
- » No Safety
- » Distrust
- » Needles strewn along the sidewalk, sides of roads, yards
- » Hungry eyes in grown faces
- » Parentless children
- » Walking corpses
- » Broken families
- » Distressed parents & grandparents
- » Social issues

- » It's getting better as far as deaths but...drug of choice has changed
- » More and more young people are addicted
- » It looks like me
- » It looks like family
- » It looks like poverty
- » It looks like heroin
- » It looks like meth
- » It looks like bath salts
- » It looks like death
- » It looks like you or me – all ages, races, socio-economic levels, educational, professional levels
- » Many people arrested and let go
- » Many put in jail – few into treatment
- » Mental health, issues along with addiction
- » Overloaded foster care system
- » People coping with mental health and addiction issues
- » Children in foster care due to familial opioid use
- » Illicit drugs circulating, increased crime
- » Drug court, fourth judicial circuit court treatment coordinator
- » Lack of direction/hope
- » Unemployment often
- » Sometimes homelessness
- » Loss of income, friendships, home, family
- » Death
- » Crime
- » Foster care
- » Draining resources
- » Unsafe neighborhoods
- » Mental health
- » Higher depression
- » Anxiety generational suicide
- » Trauma
- » People cashing in, businesses, death, prison, recovery
- » Families torn apart

- » We're losing a generation
- » Targets all ages & incomes
- » Affects families
- » Not discriminating
- » Sometimes can't see it
- » Targets everyone
- » Not discriminating
- » Sometimes you can't see it
- » Kids running free with no supervision because parents are too busy getting high
- » Sometimes it doesn't have a certain "look"
- » No or lost morals
- » Neglected children and/or responsibilities
- » Unmanageable lives and commitments
- » Death
- » Poverty
- » Crime
- » Secrecy
- » Neglect
- » Drain resources
- » Widespread impact. Age. Economics. Religion. Sex. Relationships.
- » Mental health – pre and post connections
- » Medical, social, & environmental impact



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

- » Not afraid to experiment
- » Unaware
- » Socially accepted
- » Trauma as a child
- » Sadness
- » Depression
- » No love from family
- » Mom and dad killed themselves
- » Homeless
- » Being picked on
- » Put down
- » Made fun of
- » Suicidal
- » Peer pressure
- » Opioid medical use
- » Coping and social skills [lacking]
- » Inappropriate prescription
- » Childhood with addict parents
- » Doctors over prescribing meds
- » Depression/anxiety
- » Bullies/pressured into things
- » Underage parties/lack of parenting
- » Drug Companies
- » Lack of resources – knowledge about
- » Mental health issues
- » Cycle of addictive through generational trauma
- » Living life-styles
- » Trauma
- » People you surround yourself with
- » Social
- » Appearance

- » Doctors
- » Traumatic events
- » Depression
- » Grief
- » Previous prescribed pain killers
- » Gateway to high
- » Mental illness
- » Access
- » Unemployment
- » Easy access
- » Peer pressure
- » Highly economical
- » Kids think it is “cool” and try it
- » Because their minds aren’t fully developed they get hooked quicker and sooner
- » Funny that you can smoke at 18, but drink at 21 – both before the mind is fully developed
- » Unemployment
- » Mental illness
- » Generational lack of coping skills
- » Boredom
- » Lack of education
- » Abuse
- » Easy access
- » Big pharma
- » Peer pressure
- » Pharmaceutical companies
- » Friends – peer pressure
- » Boredom
- » Lack of awareness
- » Lack of resources for recovery rehab/detox
- » Lack of coping skills
- » Fractured families
- » Physical pain
- » Spiritual devoid as a society

- » Crime
- » B & E
- » Thievery
- » Violence
- » Death
- » Young people's names in obituaries
- » Experimentation
- » "entry drugs" lead to bigger/"badder" stuff
- » Stress of life turn people on to drugs
- » Availability of drugs
- » Peer pressure
- » Untreated mental health illnesses
- » Poverty of mind, spirit, money, "lovelessness" or a lack of love. Decision of family. Exposure. Peer pressure. Normalization. Lack of education
- » Experimenting
- » Self-hatred
- » Wanting to feel different from how I felt
- » Was once the solution than became the problem
- » Having the added gene, both parents are addicts
- » Trauma
- » Disease
- » Follow in footsteps of family
- » Dr. prescription, happy
- » Poverty
- » Untreated mental illnesses
- » Genetic predisposed
- » Societal pressures – life's
- » Breakdown of family
- » Increased technology
- » Increased anxiety due to increased stress, high placed culture
- » Values family
- » Over-prescription of opioid pain killers
- » Aggressive marketing of opioids

- » Insufficient research related to opioid addiction
- » Lack of full range of treatment
- » Options in rural areas
- » Downturn in economy, specialty labor markets
- » Cheap price of heroin
- » Lack of meaningful relationships, unemployment, lack of self esteem
- » Chronic pain and over prescription of opioids
- » Way to cope with stress
- » Risky behavior
- » Drug dealers preying on vulnerable
- » Peer pressure
- » Historical paths of addiction
- » Family deterioration
- » Casualness in prescribing/inaccurate info accessibility meds
- » Lack of self esteem and motivation
- » Lack of personal connection
- » Lack of role models
- » Lack of responsibility
- » Shifting of beliefs. Greed. Additional responsibilities. Lack of good coping skills. Dealers taking advantage. Lack of societal support for families. Trying to self medicate instead of consulting doctor or talking to someone
- » Peer pressure
- » Kids think that's what is normal because they don't know any different
- » Escape from life/lack of hope
- » Self-medication/treatment
- » Plain management & profiteering
- » Health care issues
- » No where for the people to go that have problems
- » Out of control, it's everywhere, seeing on the streets
- » Cop's cars everywhere, gun shots
- » People dropping out of the houses at the fellowship home weekly
- » Lack of connection somewhere in an addict's life. Somewhere, at some point, something is missed and if a person can't or hasn't or won't come to terms and accept it; it can lead to addiction, from there it just spirals
- » Lack of self love

- » People don't want to feel their pain of their past so they self medicate to numb the feelings
- » Parents using sometime influence their children
- » Peer pressure, easy money selling for easy money
- » Lack of jobs that pay decent
- » Both parents have to work and spend less time with the family
- » Lack of proper parenting
- » No one to teach their children respect and morals
- » Social gatherings
- » Lack of "healthy" activities to do
- » Unhealthy relationships
- » People caring more about their phones than their families
- » Lack of jobs – more drug dealers than jobs
- » Loneliness
- » Self medicate. Mental and emotional pain disorders. Peer pressure. Pharmacy mills
- » Self medication
- » Loneliness
- » Deaths
- » Young trying new things
- » Get beat and made to use
- » Parents being addicts
- » Parents not being open and caring with their children
- » A generation more concerned about the internet than life
- » Families not bonding with their children
- » People not socializing outside of the internet trying to numb depression, anger, fear, abuse instead of seeking professional help
- » Medical problems – pain meds – other drugs
- » Family "tradition" – kids think it's normal
- » Peer pressure
- » Too easy to get
- » Cheap
- » Hopelessness
- » Unemployment
- » Criminal records

- » Teen pregnancy
- » Divorce
- » Mental health problems
- » Inadequate rehab opportunities
- » Trauma
- » Parents do it – early exposure?
- » Poverty/unemployment
- » Mug shots on tv, court dates, arrest warrants, sheriff interviews, police scanner
- » Lost potential
- » Lack of social interactions
- » Lack of stress coping skills, unemployment
- » Low self esteem
- » Broken family units
- » Peer groups – curiosity – experimental
- » Mental illnesses
- » Lack of education [red ribbons, week, dare]
- » Depression
- » Bullying
- » Insecure
- » Wanting a sense of belonging
- » Pharmaceutical companies/doctors
- » Childhood/trauma
- » Hereditary
- » How you were raised
- » Mental health
- » Childhood trauma
- » Life experiences
- » Genetics
- » Father's name – last name, reputation, part of town
- » Genetics
- » Trauma
- » Lifestyle – keeping up with the Joneses
- » Feeling good on the outside – no family traditions

- » Peer pressure
- » Poverty – family broken units
- » Drug exposure
- » Lack of resources
- » Lack of social interaction
- » Drs. and pharmaceuticals
- » Loss of community connections and family asking “what’s going on with you?”
- » Poverty sometimes
- » Injuries/illness – prescription drugs: bad luck
- » Childhood trauma “I wore stripes all the time, but you had to cover up them up.”
- » Hereditary
- » Hopelessness
- » Pain
- » Mental health
- » Lack of resources
- » Accessibility
- » Social isolation



WHAT STEPS MIGHT WE TAKE TO COMBAT THE ADDICTION CRISIS?

- » Address fear, hopelessness & loneliness
- » Prevent. Stop access. Build skills. Support. Social supports. Networks. Change media values. Create, promote opportunities, goals. ID best practice. Deliberate lifestyles/citizenship.
- » Intervene. More discussion needed. Promote recovery. Intervention strategies effort. Other than hospital/arrest. Outreach by other
- » Treatment. More facilities. Easier access. ID best practices. In & out of prison. Move out of prison. Follow up.
- » Self acceptance
- » Coping skills early – schools
- » Self aware information
- » More resources treatment long term
- » Taken out of hands of doctors by state medical board and state legislature
- » Lawsuits on pharmaceutical companies and restrictions on pills, #s manufactured
- » New task forces on investigating and prosecuting fentanyl
- » Medical MJ
- » Meet addicts where they are with multiple approaches
- » Provide help when it's needed
- » Educate widely about addiction as a disease, use to design programs
- » Fund evidence based detox treatment – tailor treatment to individual
- » Move addiction out of the corrections system so people don't get stigmatized with criminal records
- » Pay people what they're worth with more times to spend
- » First we need more education on a huge level starting in the schools, and in the homes. We need more detoxes and rehabs, sober living houses. Better paying jobs because that you give people hope
- » Parenting classes
- » Neonatal care
- » De-criminalize addiction
- » Better communication. Classes. Meditation. Yoga
- » Multi-“task” approach
- » Parent involvement in schools
- » Training and education
- » Better treatment facilities
- » Lack of knowledge of available help
- » Understanding from education to general public on addiction
- » More treatment centers

- » Awareness where to get help
- » Possibly media coverage at recovery events
- » Cultivating family
- » Fostering expression through arts and music
- » De-stigmatizing through dialogues
- » Education in schools, law enforcement
- » Evolve the way we treat this
- » Awareness, resources. Highlight recovery. Love. Treatment. Showcase meetings. Families speak up. Treatment options. Stop the stigma. More programs in the jails. Force treatment. More help for children services. Insurance. Educational awareness
- » More \$\$ for operational expenses of facilities. More facilities. Stigma. \$\$ for treatment/help. Community support systems. AA, NA, Al-Anon, Nar-a-teen. Wider availability of resources and education – including success stories [or even just stories] of people who are addicted. Community members actively speaking out about addiction. Legislators who give a Sh** [includes money] about this
- » Treat it as a disease
- » Triage it in emergency care
- » More immediate access to rehab
- » More rehabs [locally]
- » Recognize that active addicts are unable to make rational decisions
- » Better training for healthcare workers in treating addicts
- » Better training for law enforcement in dealing w/addicts (protect and serve)
- » More recovery homes
- » More meds to control usage
- » Better education on drugs
- » Affordable treatment
- » Focus on coping skills
- » Focus on the family
- » Focus on a spiritual element in our family + community + nation + world
- » Remove stigma attached to addiction and relapse
- » Make variety of treatments more accessible
- » Add treatment evaluations
- » Support recovery w/wrap around services
- » Implement evidence-based addiction education and prevention programming in school
- » More research into non-opioid plain treatment
- » More rehabs

- » More community action
- » 12 step program
- » You can't do anything because the person addicted has to want to do it for themselves
- » Increase support of kids affected by family/parental addictions
- » Sober living with children
- » Support structures for working families [after school, summer, weekend]
- » Success stories of treatment
- » Allow people to go to treatment centers/facilities
- » Inpatient or outpatient without opening CPS cases
- » People ARE afraid to receive help!
- » So at my school we do cool things to get rid of drugs but 5 years down the road they might. We don't have enough personal speakers talking about their stories. When I was S.A.D.D they spent money to find a person, to find a really good speaker.
- » Ed regarding addiction
- » Trauma informed care for children and training for teachers, law enforcement, medical progression
- » Increase treatment facilities that provide wrap around services
- » Treatment available in jails and prisons
- » Work oppor. For felons
- » Church involvement in community
- » Ed on coping and life skills
- » More accessible mental health resources
- » Church involvement in the community
- » More family support
- » Education more holistic
- » De-criminalize addiction
- » More community support
- » Decrease supply of drugs
- » Decrease accessible mental health resources
- » Get parents more involved with kids activities
- » Celebrate successes
- » Highlight recovery
- » Wrap around services
- » Expand treatment

- » Peer support
- » Train employees
- » Teaching coping skills school/church/home/social networks/workshops
- » More education/testimonies
- » Community activities
- » Resources
- » Meaningful, funded LT treatment. Both in facility & wrap around in community & for preg income & parents & children
- » Meaningful community education
- » Prevention: teach addiction for elementary on up to seniors
- » In every church, business, school, community organization
- » More education – start early
- » Treatment centers
- » More education on the subject
- » Better resources
- » Therapy
- » More rehabs
- » Meetings AA/NA
- » Proper medications
- » Understanding of the disease
- » Treatment detox/long-term
- » Educate!!
- » More sponsors
- » 12 steps/meetings
- » What's the underlying problem motivating the addiction? Then treat from a holistic place
- » Showcase meetings – make mtg. known help families have the coverage to talk
- » Meet people's needs.
- » Awareness
- » Resources
- » Focus on recovery
- » Love them
- » Stability
- » More treatment options

- » Stigma
- » More programs in the jails
- » Teaching in the jails
- » Children's service – more help



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:

- What help is being provided to assist groups helping the kids from families with addiction?
- I'm interested to hear what the addicts want or need. Nobody really asks them.
- Need to promote/identify effective intervention options other than hospitalization and arrest
- Why don't we conduct more involuntary commitments to rehab?
- Why are available resources not made public? Many don't know what our community offers or how to get help.
- Where do loved ones begin to combat addiction?
- How can insurance companies be more helpful in treatment of addiction?
- How can I help you overcome addiction?
- How can we encourage people to be better educated (not just turn to the charismatic flavor of the month)?
- How do we celebrate and coordinate response to substance abuse disorder needs in the Mid-Ohio Valley?
- What is the percent rate of increase from one generation to the next?
- Why is addiction still highlighted instead of emphasizing recovery and hope?
- How can we get people with money and people in power to care and to help?
- How can we involve more citizens in this issue?
- What happens to children whose parents go into recovery?
- For a person in recovery: What is the biggest issue that society doesn't understand about addiction and how did you overcome it?
- What can we do to help or save another person's life?
- Why is the community so scared to help the addict? Why keep the stigma when there is a whole recovery community?

LOCAL MEDIA PARTNERS



CLUTCH MOV
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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
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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

@YOURVOICEOHIO

