

# CATHY HAYCOX

## MARION, OH

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

I lost my only daughter to a heroin overdose November 2, 2016. She left behind 7 children including a 2 month old daughter. She had been in recovery for almost a year through Marion Area Counseling. She was on medical assisted opioid shot but had to stop when became pregnant. She did very well until she had her daughter and was suffering from post-partum depression. She had to wait 3 weeks to get into see the doctor at Marion Area Counseling to start back up on the shot. She died over an overdose 2 days before her appointment. I have been in recovery for over 5 years after using crack cocaine for 13 years. Also, my youngest son is serving 5 years mandatory in prison for crimes non-violent crimes to support his drug habit. I went back to college at age 56, I have completed the addiction studies certificate and will graduate in the Spring next year with a social work degree. I have lost 11 family members and friends to addiction and that's what inspired me to help make a difference and give back to my community. Our city has a very high overdose rate and we need more facilities and programs to help fight addiction and opioids in our community.

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

I believe the economy plays a big role in addiction. When people can't get adequate housing and jobs they feel hopeless and turn to drugs because that's the only type of neighborhoods they can afford to live in. That is exactly what happened to me after my separation and divorce. I suffered from depression and mental illnesses I was never diagnosed with. I just wanted to feel better, happy again. I lived in a neighborhood high in poverty and drugs were all around me, easily accessible and once I started I was so broken, felt even more hopeless and had so much shame that I thought I would be an addict the rest of my life.

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

I think more awareness to help society be more understanding of addiction and mental health illnesses. There is so much stigma attached to both addiction and mental illness. More affordable housing and jobs. I don't think employers should be able to use a person's past in deciding whether to hire them. People change, I have, although society hasn't made that process easy. I am still looked down upon for my past. People are very judge mental. Addicts aren't bad people, they made bad decisions but they are still human beings. I know when you give people hope they can achieve sobriety and recover. I did.

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

Love thy neighbor. No-one is perfect. People in poverty struggle all their life and do things people don't accept but when it comes down to it "fight or flight kicks in" I'm not making excuses, but generational

poverty I believe is the number one cause of addiction. Give people a chance to change, believe in them and support community events that inspire change. When people want to talk, listen.

**Anything else you'd like to share?:**

Poverty is a vicious cycle, it's kind of like addiction and unless you have lived in it and struggled to survive both you don't really know what people go through. Stop judging others on looks or past. Be kind to people, you can make a difference.