



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: HEROIN AND OPIOID OVERDOSE EPIDEMIC

(KINGSTON, NY) “Heroin is becoming main stream. It is taking lives unnecessarily, ruining families and leaving individuals hooked on it for life, according to District Attorney D. Holley Carnright. These comments were made at a stakeholder chat on the growing epidemic of heroin and opioid use and overdoses in Ulster County. Legislative Chairman John Parete recently hosted this first of a series of chats to bring to light the insidiousness of the disease.

Mr. Richard Muellerleile, President of the Ulster County EMS Council, stated, in 2013, the 38 certified EMS units in Ulster County were “dispatched for 363 overdose calls” with an average of 351 calls for the previous three years.

As the founder of the Narcan overdose response program at the City of Kingston Fire Department, EMS Director Chris Hyatt reported “Since the initiation of the program, on the 7th of April, we have had to use it six times and three lives have been saved as a result.”

“There is a lack of public knowledge and awareness regarding this epidemic. Public education is the primary step to addressing this problem,” noted Mr. Muellerleile.

District Attorney D. Holley Carnright commented, “Today heroin does not have a dangerous label attached to it like it did back in the 70’s. As people shift from pharmaceuticals to heroin, it has become too much of a main stream product. We are finding people of all ages and from all segments of our community who are addicted to heroin. I believe it is time to bring back the Madison Avenue type ad campaign to educate people regarding the devastating and potentially lethal consequences of heroin use”.

Former SUNY New Paltz Police Chief Ray Bryant noted, “When we had Hollywood on our side, they helped us to make it look ugly. People sometimes look at the DA and law enforcement’s anti-drug messages suspiciously.”

Ulster County Sheriff Paul Van Blarcum reiterated, while law enforcement’s role is the enforcement of laws, “we are also here to save lives. They changed the Good Samaritan law. If your friend overdoses, and even if there is heroin or drugs laying around, help him or her. Don’t be afraid.”

Legislator Carl Belfiglio, District 8 from the Town of Esopus, summed up this stakeholder chat saying, “This is a call to arms. Risky behaviors, like experimenting with drugs, can have a lifetime of community impacts. There are concrete and lasting activities that we can be doing right now, to stem the tide.”

Chairman Parete has enlisted the assistance of former Legislative Chairman Louis Klein to guide this important Legislative priority through the many obstacles. Mr. Klein said that he was “more than happy to help in any way he can to help Ulster County save lives.”

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