



STEPPING STONES

Providing Steps to Recovery

Volume 10
Issue 1

Summer 2011

Heroin Project Focus Groups report findings

The growing and tragic impact of heroin use in Will County prompted the Heroin Project Focus Groups study, an independent gathering of information with scientific analysis. Working together, the Southwest Coalition for Substance Abuse Issues, Will County Juvenile Justice System and Chestnut Health Systems set a goal to “gather information to generate recommendations and a comprehensive plan to address this issue.”

Seven focus groups, including 76 participants, met between February and April 2011. The following groups were represented: substance abuse treatment providers, high school deans, probation officers, first responders, recovering adults, high school youth, and parents who currently had a child struggling with heroin addiction or had lost a child to heroin.

The report indicated that generally the first use of any substance occurred in middle school, noting that while heroin was never the first substance used, its highly addictive nature and current availability put it in the “perfect storm” category of factors. “Heroin is cheap, easy to get, to use,” the report states, “It provides the best high, the stigma for youth is gone, although the stigma exists with parents, school and the community.”

Heroin Use Trends

The focus groups confirmed the findings of a Roosevelt University Study analyzing heroin trends in the Chicago suburbs and pointing to an increase in abuse by white males between the ages of 18 and 25. The focus groups noted use by individuals under the age of 18 with an increase in use by females with youth representing the middle- and upper-middle-class.

Why Youth Begin to Use

The groups determined three areas of concern: family issues, peer pressure and mental health.

The Impact of Heroin

The parent focus group summed it up. Two comments that reflect those feelings: “It breaks the soul of the family.” “You never sleep, you wonder when you are going to get the call.”

Report Solutions: Prevention and Education

Programs should begin before middle school with age appropriate information on drug effects. School-based programs need to focus on coping, positive peer influence, connection and communication skills, mentoring, and healthy alternatives. Parent-focused programming should include awareness of the heroin problem, its legal implications and signs of use. Programs on parenting skills, relationships, and family communications are needed. The community needs to be educated and involved.

Substance Abuse Treatment

The report noted, “There needs to be more treatment programs available and they need to be more effective.”

Laws/Legislation/Law Enforcement

Recommendations included: stiffer penalties imposed earlier in the addiction process and treatment mandated earlier; stiffer penalties for dealers; control of needle sales; legislation mandating schools and communities to report heroin overdoses and deaths; drug testing in schools; investigation of overdose deaths as homicides; and mandating teachers to report student substance use. More law enforcement resources and efforts are needed to “crack down on known locations where drug deals are made.”

Recovery and Support

There is a need for more support groups at school and in the community as well as 12-step- and faith-based programs.

Early Intervention

Suggestions focused on the school's role in the early identification of substance abuse. It was noted that parents need to be educated on symptoms of drug use. The youth focus group responded that a priority should be placed on identifying and dealing with students coming to school high. They believed the focus should not be on expulsion or punishment, but on efforts to get the student into treatment and recovery programs.

Conclusion

"It is hoped that this report not only helps to clarify the scope of the problem, but points to ways that everyone can begin to work together in a strategic way so that we can say, 'Parents, don't lose hope.'"

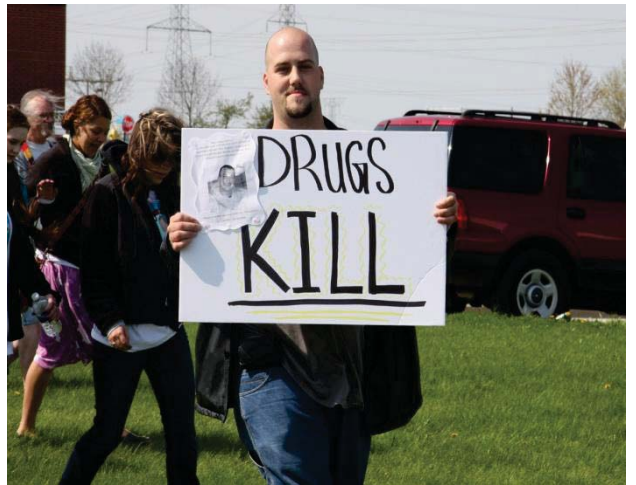
Community Forum is big step in rallying a response to heroin problem in Will County

They came together on a Saturday afternoon in April to remember, to challenge the "hero" in themselves and to inform a community that change must come. They walked the streets of Homer Glen, carrying signs and the hurt in their hearts for the children and friends lost to heroin. They rallied at the Menard's Parking Lot with a community of support including a crowd of 450, rock bands, elected officials and community representatives.

It was a unique coalition of the newly formed HERO (Heroin Epidemic Relief Organization), the Southwest Coalition on Substance Use Issues and the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Association (IADDA).

According to Paul Lauridsen, Stepping Stones Clinical Director, "The forum was a success. There was broad community involvement that included parents, families, businesses, churches, schools, healthcare and other community service providers, the Village of Homer Glen, elected officials, and representatives of public safety providers including the EMS and law enforcement.

"All attending were moved by the reports on the number of heroin overdose deaths; and by the tributes of those who spoke and memorialized loved ones who died from heroin overdoses. Will County Executive Larry Walsh's commitment to see that there is a coordinated, effective response gave hope to all in attendance. Ultimately, the real measure of success will come with reduction in the number of heroin overdose deaths."



Photos by Charles Pelkie

Director of Public Affairs,
Will County States Attorney Office

(At left) A memorial to area youth lost to heroin presented a powerful message for forum guests. (Above) Brian Kirk, co-founder of HERO with John Roberts, puts out the call for heroes with his sign.



(Above, at far left) There was something for everyone. The Youth enjoyed the music of The Scissors and The Frantic.
 (Above, middle) Stepping Stones Clinical Director, Paul Lauridsen addresses the group.
 (Above, right) The Resource Fair included representatives from Will County's Drug Court.
 (At left) The crowd settled in to learn about the problem and how they can be a part of the solution.
 (Below, center) Will County States Attorney James Glasgow shares some vital statistics.
 (Below, at right) Will County Executive Larry Walsh talks with Stepping Stones Executive Director Pete McLenighan.

Photos by Charles Pelkie

Director of Public Affairs,
 Will County States Attorney Office



**7th Annual Rally 'Round Recovery
 Saturday, Sept. 17, 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 Bicentennial Park-201 W Jefferson St., Joliet**

Join in our annual event marking Recovery here and now! Special headliner emcee Tommy Connolly. Please visit www.steppingstonetreatment.com for more information, watch the newspapers, listen to the radio, call 815-744-4555.

From the Director ...

With a Lot of Help from our Friends ...

We find it very rewarding to work with people who are so determined to establish a new life for themselves. We see dramatic successes every day. Our most difficult task is to provide encouragement to people without insurance while we inform them and their loved ones that there is a discouraging wait for services.

Two factors have combined to further restrict access to services. First, we've lost nearly \$250,000 in state funding over the past several years and second, reimbursement from the State of Illinois does not even cover

the cost of some of our most essential services. We subsidize these services just to break even. Fortunately, we have some really great friends.

On Sat., Aug. 27, the family and friends of Adam Stoner will hold the 3rd Annual Charity Golf Outing to remember Adam and to support Stepping Stones' efforts to assist people with their efforts to become alcohol and drug free. Please see: http://adamstonercharitygolfouting.org/Adam_Stoner_Charity_Golf_Outing/Home.html

Along with the golf outing, Witches' Night Out has become an important friend. The event is scheduled for Oct. 27. This event is about dressing up and having fun while raising funds for organizations struggling to provide services for women in need. We are grateful to the organizers for including us as recipients of the proceeds.

The United Ways of Will and Grundy Counties continue their outstanding service to our communities and have been essential to our efforts. Together with our faithful, long-term donors and people who donate for the first time, we continue our mission to provide services even if the recipient is unable to pay. Please use the enclosed envelope to support our mission. We need your support more than ever. We thank you in advance for your generosity.

Finally, I'd like to introduce Katheryn Wiedman, Event and Community Relations Coordinator. We are excited to have her on board to organize and lead our efforts. For further information, please contact Katheryn at 815-744-4555, ext. 116, or me at ext. 125.

- Pete McLenighan

Pleased to introduce

Mary Coffey, RN, MBA, is the chief executive officer of the Will County Community Health Center, a division of the Will County Health Department.

"Serving on the Board of Directors at Stepping Stones provides me with an opportunity to provide input and guidance on issues that impact those who suffer from alcohol and substance abuse disorders and those who diligently work towards their recovery," says Ms. Coffey.

In addition to serving on the Board of Directors of Stepping Stones Recovery Center, she also serves Healthy Family Illinois, University of St. Francis Doctor of Nursing Practice Program and College of Nursing Advisory Boards and the Illinois Primary Health Care Association's (IPHCA) Personnel, Compliance and Risk Management and Assembly of Delegates committees.

Ms. Coffey serves as co-chair for IPHCA Compliance and Risk Management Committee and chair of the Personnel Committee for Stepping Stones. In addition, she sits on the PIHXCA Electronic Health Care Implementation Committee

STEPPING STONES, INC.

1621 Theodor Street

Joliet, IL 60435

(815) 744-4555

Fax (815) 744-4670

E-mail contact at website:

www.steppingstonestreatment.com

Mission Statement

Stepping Stones is dedicated to providing effective treatment for persons suffering from the illness of addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs, even if these persons are unable to pay for the cost of such services.

Board of Directors

Robert Fraser, President	Richard Snyder, Vice President
William Drilling, Treasurer	William Markley, Secretary
Mary Coffey	Vanessa Newsome
Patricia Fera	Jerry Sterr
Judy Kelly	Dennis Welch
Carlos Morales	

Advisory Board

Robert Kelly	Stephen Masters
Shirley Masters	Sr. Maurice White, OSF

Stepping Stones has been determined by the IRS to be a 501c3 organization and donations are deductible as provided by law.

Your donations are appreciated! With reduced state funding, our ability to serve everyone who require our services is affected. We thank you for your concern and help!

