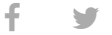


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From RN to the classroom, a teacher seeks to heal

May 17, 2022 Mount Airy News News, Top Stories 0

By Ryan Kelly ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com



Dena Cave, far right, is a registered nurse who has spent the past 14 years teaching and helped coordinate the Addiction Awareness Week at Surry Central High School. She is seen here with Capt. Scott Hudson, Sheriff Steve Hiatt, John Jondczak of The Barn at Heritage Farm, Sandra Hurley of The Mount Airy News, Habeth Ortega and Mark Willis of the county's

WEATHER

Mount Airy, NC 27030

Weather	Wind	Rain	Sun	Moo
76.6 °F Mostly Sunny				
55 °F		84 °F		
59 87 WED		62 THU		
1:35 PM Tue M				

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substance abuse office, medical examiner Dale Harold and Charlotte Reeves, the county's substance abuse outreach specialist.

VIDEO



Nursing and teaching are two professions that are born from a similar strand of DNA, it takes a certain type of person to want to go into a field serving others. Dena Cave was born in Surry County, and it is there that she continues to make a significant contribution to the lives of the students at Surry Central High School, their families, and the community.

A graduate of Surry Central herself back in the days of the first Gulf War, she has been a nurse for 30 years. In the latest chapter of her life story, she has spent the past 14 years teaching Health Science at Surry Central. "Health science is an elective for students who want to pursue a career in healthcare," Cave explained.

Recently, Surry Central held "Addiction Awareness Week" and in this one-week campaign tackled head on an issue that is plaguing not just Surry County, but the nation. Charlotte Reeves of the county's substance abuse prevention office said Cave's efforts were unlike any other she had seen in a public school and that she is "really amazing." Reeves aided in the week by talking to students about substance abuse and the adolescent brain and said people such as Cave need more credit than they receive.

Cave explained, "The idea for this week was inspired by many things. As a nurse, I have seen how people can be physically affected by drugs. As a Christian, I have seen how a person's spiritual health can be affected. And as a teacher, I see every day how this epidemic is affecting the mental health of not only the addicts but the people who love them – their children. And in turn, they become caught up in a cycle of substance abuse."

During the week, there were guest speakers, contests, and classroom activities to educate and inform students by reading addiction stories, information on how to get help, and resources available in Surry County for an opportunity for life-long recovery.

"We have a couple of different contests: Essay, chalk art, and poster. Our essay prompt was substance abuse and its consequences on our society," she said. "We narrowed it down to the top ten for the judges to review, but it was still very difficult. The essay was not judged on grammar or spelling, but on how the student described the impact of substance abuse and its consequences."

"Some did leave tears in the judge's eyes. Most of the students wrote about how they personally had been affected – mother, father, sister, or brother addicted to substances."

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Surry Central took a hard hit with the passing of Noah Lowe from an overdose in 2020. “Noah was one of my students. I cared for him. He was one of the most intelligent students that I had ever taught. But Noah could not overcome his addiction,” Cave said.

“His mother Carey spoke to our students during our week. You could hear a pin drop in our gym. Many of the upperclassmen knew Noah, had a class with him, and maybe even partied with him. Hearing her story hit hard. I have since had several students talk about how powerful it was to hear her tell her side as a mom.”

Madison Freeman told her side of the story as a child living amongst substance abuse for the winning essay “Drugs Create Monsters.” With earnestness that exceeds her youth, she recalled the feelings she had about the abuse happening around her and its destructive power within her own family.

It follows in its entirety with the permission of Madison:

“Drugs come in all forms and can sneak into a person’s life without them realizing the addiction behind it. An addiction all starts with eagerness and peer pressure to try something new. Most of the time nobody wants to talk about the consequences and real-life events that are going on in their community or even their personal life. While growing up I personally struggled with feeling guilty for being the blame for my father’s addiction to drugs. So, I want to encourage people to talk to somebody even if it’s an anonymous online counselor or someone who is experiencing the same thing as you.

“My father was an addict to several substances, which caused him to do dangerous things to himself and even his family. Although he started out with opioids, he increasingly turned to stronger substances such as meth. I watched my father turn from a strong hard worker to someone I didn’t even recognize. I tried to protect my two younger siblings from the horrible person he was becoming. He did several things that I would say changed my life forever, especially in the perspective of how I viewed men and how they treated women. I was never able to have a good relationship with my father and it hurts to see other people being so close to their father.

“I am proud of my mother for being strong and being able to get herself and her children away from the monster he had become. I pray every day that he would get away from the horrible things he was doing and put his family through. I pray that nobody has to deal with this in their lifetime. This is why I am such a strong advocate for raising awareness of substance abuse and all the things that go along with it. If you or someone you love is dealing with an addiction you can call the National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357, they can provide you with the assistance you need to get through your addiction.”

NASCAR Schedule

Date	Race/Location	Winner
May.01	DuraMAX Drydene 400 presented by RelaDyne / Dover Motor Speedway	Chase El
May.08	Goodyear 400 / Darlington Raceway	Joey Log
May.15	AdventHealth 400 / Kansas Speedway	Kurt Bus
May.22	NASCAR All- Star Open / Texas Motor Speedway	FS1
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