

JOB'S E-EDITION CLASSIFIEDS SUBSCRIBE



SIGN UP FOR NOTICES ANDROID APP IOS APP

The Mount Airy News

HOME NEWS SPORTS OBITUARIES OPINION FEATURES TV/GAMES

EVENTS SHOP LOCAL PUBLIC NOTICES TUESDAY/THURSDAY

DECEMBER 17, 2021

SEARCH ...

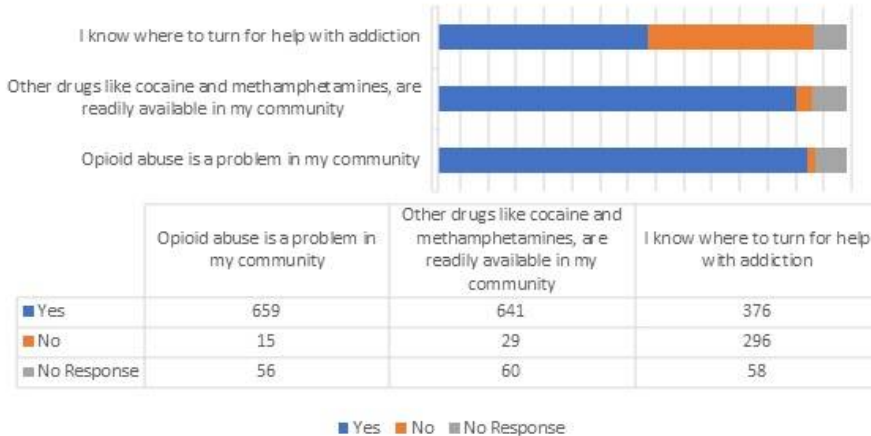
HOME > NEWS > Transportation a key in battle against drugs

Transportation a key in battle against drugs

December 17, 2021 Mount Airy News News, Top Stories 0

By Ryan Kelly ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com

VOICES Survey Results 2021



The Volunteering Opinions & Information Concerning Eliminating Substance Use Community Surveys (V.O.I.C.E.S.) survey asked county residents to give feedback on their knowledge of substance use disorder.

Ryan Kelly | The News



WEATHER

Mount Airy, NC 27030

Weather	Wind	Rain	Sun	Mo
---------	------	------	-----	----

51.3 °F
Mostly Cloudy

50 °F 68 °F

41 67 SAT	25 50 SUN	27 48 MON
--------------	--------------	--------------

9:30 AM Fri Dec 17 W

FREE eero WiFi or FREE Internet Upgrade SERVICE ELECTRIC

ADVERTISEMENT

VIDEO

ADVERTISEMENT





Mark Willis, county opioid response director, speaks to the county commissioners in January. and purchase vehicles to be used to take the patients to their treatment.

Access to services can be a common complaint of marginalized groups and their grievances sometimes require legal action to bring about change. Some situations though cannot wait and require an innovative approach to solve an ongoing problem.

When it came to accessing care for those battling substance use disorder in Surry County, a large obstacle was getting the patients to the care they needed. A transportation initiative was launched in May that was funded by the county as well as grants called 'Ride the Road to Recovery.' The funding allowed the team to hire staff

"A lot of substance use disorder patients don't have adequate transportation to get to the treatment that's mainly in cities in Surry County, so we're going to them to provide that for them," said Nathan Walls of the county manager's office.

The number of requests for rides since the program's inception has already climbed at a rate that shows how needed this transportation service is and appreciated it may be going forward. The report from the county said: "Requests rose from 31 in June to 122 in October, climbing each month.

"Between July and August, numbers almost doubled from 41 to 79. Starting in May, trips increased from 13 to 55 in June, to 129 in July, to 145 in August, to 195 in September and to 256 in October. That represents an overall increase of over 1,869% ridership."

That growth means this program needs help in the form of volunteer drivers. A newly initiated volunteer driver program called T.I.R.E.S. (Together Ideal Results Emerge Successfully) seeks volunteers who will operate program vehicles and transport residents to needed services.

This novel approach to get the patients to the care they need by using volunteer drivers may be on the vanguard. It is thought to be the only program of its kind in North Carolina, with no other documentation in the state of "other local governments primarily providing transportation services to substance use patients."

ADVERTISEMENT

POLL

If Democrats lose majority control of the House in the 2022 midterms, do you expect that the Congressional investigations into various individuals from the Trump Administration will come to a halt?

- Yes, I expect so
- Maybe, I'm not sure
- No, I don't expect so
- Other / No opinion

RECIPE OF THE DAY



Getting those in need to their treatment is just part of the goal for Ride the Road to Recovery. Beyond those important rides to treatment, “also rides to medical, probation, court, TASC, Vocational Rehabilitation and NC Works appointments, because they have no other means to get there,” said Mark Willis, the director of the county’s Substance Abuse Recovery Department.

“If we are truly helping people get on the road to recovery, the only way we can do that is to connect county residents to their other needs, as well. Thanks to this big picture view of recovery, and our marketing efforts, we’ve seen a rise in riders.”

The TIRES initiative is just launching and as transportation coordinator Deborah Giep said, it gives the residents of Surry County a chance to connect with and help their neighbors in need.

COVID-19 fears, she said, could play in to concerns people may have in participating but the county is helping with those personal safety supplies for riders and drivers. “We supply safety gear; every rider is provided with a mask if they do not have one.”

Early this year, the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery asked for the public to participate in a survey on their experiences and perceptions of substance use disorder and those battling the disease. Seven hundred and thirty V.O.I.C.E.S. (Volunteering Opinions & Information Concerning Eliminating Substance Use Community Surveys) were collected from Feb. 8 to April 14. With participation across demographic groups, and more than 200 additional write-in answers from the public, it provided a snapshot of this community’s understanding and perceptions of the problem.

What was found from those 730 surveys was that there is wide knowledge of an ongoing substance use problem in this area, and an equally alarming number of participants said finding drugs in their community was easy.

Of 677 responses to the question “Do You Know of a Local Family Who Has Been Negatively Impacted by Opioid Use?” 588 said yes, they know of such a family, which is 87% of respondents.

“Do You Think Your Community Has an Opioid Addiction Problem?” 97.8% answered yes.

When asking if “Illicit Opioids, Including Illicit Prescription Medication and Drugs like Heroin, are Readily Available in my Community” 94.1% replied they felt these were easily found.

Recipe Of The Day



Soft Christmas Sugar Cookies

ADVERTISEMENT



One data point shows public perception on substance use disorder has changed over the years. The community surveyed were presented with options on what the root cause of substance use disorder may be: choice, a failing of moral character or disease. Residents of Surry County acknowledge what medical professionals agree on – these people are dealing with an illness.

Pastor Michelle Mathis said in a video found on SurryCountyCares.com that for some people who see substance use disorder as a moral failing, she wants to remind them, “None of us are without sin. Jesus even said, he who is without sin shall cast the first stone.” She is reminded of a phrase she borrowed from a pastor in Ohio, do you want to be a stone thrower – or do you want to get down like He did and help?

Addiction is a chronic and debilitating disease from which some will not recover despite all best efforts. That does not mean all best efforts will not be made. Helping neighbors in need and bringing them to the treatment that can help alter the trajectory of their lives can be a game changing experience for the one who is suffering and their loved ones.

For every \$1 spent on prevention, \$10 are saved on long term treatment costs alone, according to the Surry County Substance Abuse website. Getting one person to a facility such as Daymark for treatment can prevent a litany of other issues associated with withdrawal. One less person looking for an unlocked car door at the gas station would be a net positive for the entire community as well.

“They see the light,” Giep said of the participants in On the Road to Recovery, “(They) want to continue on the route and the journey and are looking forward to finishing up their programs.”

The programs exist, the grant money is in place for the vehicles and the county staff to facilitate the ride share program. What is needed now are the drivers, and the community is asked to help.

To request a ride from the transportation program, or become a volunteer driver, residents should contact Deborah Giep at 336-401-8266 or submit a message at www.surrycountycare.com/transportation.

