



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Pawling community forum searches for solutions to heroin addiction

TERRENCE P. MURPHY February 25, 2015

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, DRUGS, PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS**

| COMMITTEE: **HEROIN TASK FORCE**



PAWLING, NY – Just last week the City of Poughkeepsie police department confiscated 108 bags of heroin from a single apartment in yet another drug bust in the war on heroin raging in the region. Last night, community advocates and a hundred local residents joined a panel filled with local elected officials, law enforcement experts, and treatment professionals hosted by State Senator Terrence Murphy focused on providing additional solutions to the

epidemic.

“For two years I have been on a personal mission to combat the growing heroin epidemic,” Senator Murphy said. “Now as a State Senator, I am determined to build strong partnerships with the different sectors of our community, from law enforcement officials to treatment professionals, to determine the best methods we can put in place to save the lives of our kids. At 5:15pm this afternoon there was another overdose save in Putnam County, saving the life of a young woman who had overdosed on opioids, thanks to our first responder’s knowledge and use of the lifesaving drug Narcan.”

At last night’s community forum, emphasis was put on part of Murphy’s original 7-point heroin plan, additional funding for educational programs such as DARE, along with new ideas for long term support plans to help recovering addicts find jobs, additional locations for people to properly dispose of their medications and 24-hour drug crisis hotlines.

While DARE is one plank of his original seven-point plan, Murphy indicated the ideas are fluid and will change as a result of feedback from the forums. “Tonight’s forum provided great feedback and ideas which I intend to bring to my colleagues in Albany,” he said.

“We need to do everything possible to stop the heroin epidemic from destroying and ending more lives,” Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor said. “We’ve already made some strides with the expanded first responder access to overdose antidotes saving several lives recently in Dutchess County. There’s much more to do though. I’m looking forward to working with Senator Murphy to find new avenues to ending the heroin epidemic.”

“This was a great opportunity for Senator Murphy to come to Dutchess County and work on this growing epidemic,” Beekman Supervisor Barbara Zulauf said. “It was great to hear all of the comments, opportunities and aspects of what we need to examine when looking at this

problem.”

Rob Liffland, the Village of Pawling Mayor said, “I appreciate the time the Senator took to recognize the terrible problem in Dutchess County and taking the lead to do something about it.”

According to the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1.8 million New Yorkers currently require assistance with chemical dependency – many due to opioid abuse, and nearly half of drug treatment admissions in the state result from an addiction to heroin or prescription opioids.

“On behalf of Dave Kelly, Supervisor, and myself as Deputy Supervisor I want to thank the Senator and his staff for having the forum in Pawling,” Pawling Councilman Bill Johnson said. “As evidenced by the turnout, the need for information on this epidemic is great. As a father of a child affected by heroin I know the needs of other parents facing or about to face the issues of heroin/opiate addiction. The Senator is on the right track by looking to get insurance companies to cover inpatient rehab, immediately, not after an assessment or series of qualifying questions. I am anxious to continue my involvement with this program and share other ideas.”

Steve Salomone, a founder of Drug Crisis in Our Backyard, said “The forum in Pawling is an excellent example of Senator Murphy’s action and follow through on his promise to hit the Hudson Valley addiction crisis head on. By bringing together the wide array of informed experts onto the panel and opening up the discussion to the public we have a two way open communication so we can create legislative action to deal with this serious issue. We heard from a number of individuals that are in recovery and I believe we need to continue to harness that type of experience in public forums like this to create the message to those that are suffering that there is hope.”

Senator Murphy was also joined by Dutchess County Legislators Alan Surman, Angela Flesland and John Thomes. Earlier this month, he was appointed co-chair of the Senate's Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Abuse which will travel the state to further examine this perilous issue and how the state can further address it.

"From additional drop boxes for people to properly dispose of their medications, to the need for a post treatment jobs program and drug crisis hotlines, these are all things we need to further dissect to determine the best course of action," Senator Murphy said. "The bottom line is we cannot lose another life to this terrible epidemic and I will continue to fight every day to bring awareness to this terrible epidemic."

According to the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Threat Assessment 2015 there were 64 overdose deaths reported in Dutchess County in 2013, an increase of more than 160% since 2009. Similar statistics were reported for Westchester County, which saw drug overdose deaths more than double from 45 in 2010 to 94 in 2013. The same trend has been observed in Putnam County which saw the highest number of overdose deaths in 2012.