

## Opioid Addiction – Rotary- January 25, 2018

### **CORRELATIONS**

- **Nov 22, 1963**-President John F. Kennedy was assassinated? How many of you remember where you were or what you were doing?
- **9/11/2001**- How many of you remember where you were, or what you were doing? **How many of you knew, or through a friend or relative, knew someone killed on 9/11?**

We are all 6 people or fewer away from 9/11. We are all 6 people or fewer away from knowing someone with a drug addiction.

Every family dealing w/ an Opioid death, is experiencing their own 9/11.

We are serving families that have lost both of their children to overdoses or suicide, what can I say to comfort them? 3 yrs. ago this past Tues / HKS/ 99y 7mos/ Sorrow, Sadness but not this deep- deep grief, I'm talking about. What can I say?

- The jury is still out, but I'm wondering how often there's a correlation between overdose and suicide? There's been a huge spike in Suicide too.

### **What I, as an FD, am seeing:**

- **Opioid Death: leading cause for those under age 50 / Age is trending upward/ The median age for SFCS = 37.2/ We average over 1/mo.; had 2/wk. a couple of times**
- We served a family where a cousin was in with the immediate family to make arrangements. 6 weeks later that cousin died of an overdose
- A sister was so embarrassed by her sister's overdose and death. "That's not her. That's not how I want people to remember her." Her death occurred in Kent County. The sister wanted answers so she went to the police & the detective placed in front of her an 8" stack of files and said "So do all these other families"
- Or, we see the Friend that provided the drugs was so distraught at the gravesite.
- We had services for a Physician who OD. 8 mos later we had services for his son who OD. He was Pre-med
- These are educated and affluent people, but the drugs alter the brain!
- 55 yr old male/ married/ father of 2/ gave the gift of unconditional love/ honest guy with a heart/ great mechanic/ wonderful provider/ carried his Bible with him in an attaché case/ loved the Lord with all his might & soul. His Family was numb/ quiet/ acted in suspended unbelief/ months later they had their wound re-opened, when the "amended DC arrived"/ died in October/ Amended DC

yesterday/ cause of death: "Mixed drug intoxication including Blank, Blank & Blank/ daughter is still quiet & numb

- 22 yr. old single female. Waitress, found dead in her apt in GR. Started smoking pot as a teen
- Mother of 2 girls, age 12 & 14. Her husband committed suicide/ She never had a drug or alcohol problem/ Wanted our grief counselor, Ginger Wolffis, to come to her house several times to speak with her daughters, but would never be a part of the conversation herself. She herself could never get over her husband's suicide. She worked at one of the hospitals. Had access to Meds. Was fired. Lost custody of the girls. 3 yrs. after her husband committed suicide, died of an OD
- Female, early 30's/ 3 kids/ 3 rehabs (statewide)/ Finally let go (kicked out) of Teen challenge/ wouldn't (couldn't) follow the rules/ OD less than a week later.
- Single male / early 20's/ found in bed by his mother/ had been in jail for dealing/ been in rehab/ was clean/ drank 4 bottles of cough syrup along with taking 7 different street drugs/ suicide by overdose??
- We see parents and siblings at their wits end. They've lived with this so long that Death can be a release & relief: "We knew this was coming" just didn't know when
- **It takes an emotional toll on us**
- Kids don't have \$ for funerals & some parents aren't expecting it
- **Seeing more OD than homicides**
- 75% are using someone else's prescription
- **We staff larger for a lot of reasons, but often because of youth and size. We still need to support these families with DIGNITY when over 300 people show up on a Sunday evening for a service.**
- The Grief is so intense., it can be hard to make arrangements w/ fam. Some parents can't function afterwards. Can't leave the house or get out of bed
- **We're burying children of friends**
- We must use "Universal Precautions" while embalming and handling the deceased. We look like surgeons because trace amounts can be ingested through the skin by touch. It doesn't have to be injected.
- We're losing a generation
  - Losing a chance to see a father walk his daughter down the wedding aisle
  - Drugs don't care
  - Losing birthdays, graduations, grandchildren, all the family occasions

We, as FD, understand the importance of not judging family members or even addicts themselves. We realize it's a disease that devastates every life it touches.

We have seen the terrifying power of addiction and the hole that an overdose leaves behind

The world is not the same place today., as even a few years ago. The ripples of addiction have spread to every corner of the United States.

- From the inner cities to rural neighborhoods, from the poorest communities to the most affluent .....
- drug addiction is so widespread and prevalent that morgues across the country are having difficulty managing the influx of bodies. Think about that unknown fact.

*We want to help take up the Opioid Fight and move Muskegon off the graph we saw earlier.*

### **TALKING ABOUT IT (some of this may have already been mentioned)**

Up until now, no one in MKG wanted to talk about it. It's like when we were children playing hide and go seek. We thought if we closed our eyes, no one would find us. We have closed our eyes to this epidemic.

When people ask, 'how did it get so bad?' my mind will often answer, **because we took too long to acknowledge the problem.** Denying that an issue exists, doesn't make it go away.

### **Facts:**

NARCAN, the anti-overdose drug, saves lives, in fact, in 2014 there were 26,000 reversals in US; but Some of these drugs are 800 x's stronger than Elephant Tranquilizers. It can take two doses of NARCAN.

In 2015 this epidemic Cost our Gov't over \$504B

In 2015 we had 100 deaths per day in US

In 2016 we had 175 deaths per day or 64,070 OD Deaths up 5's from 1999

(that's over the 58,220 that died in all the years of the Vietnam War. That conflict lasted 20 years)

**In 2016, what were the top 5 states suffering Opioid deaths?** WV, OH, NH, PA & KY  
(CDC: Center for Disease control)

Those suffering from mental health issues are 4-5 times more inclined to become addicted.

It's dangerous for First Responders, an FBI agent died from overdose, by touch

I wanted to show the "movie trailer" today of the FBI film "Chasing the Dragons", but we just didn't have time. But, I want to share 3 quotes from that film:

- "And I remember when I pushed on her chest I heard that last breath. And I spend my Sundays looking at a gray headstone in a patch of grass. I will be spending all my holidays there because she took that wrong turn." - Trish, parent of a young addict who died, FBI Film Chasing the Dragon.
- "Well, usually if I had stuff a day before, I would always save a bag for the morning times so when I wake up I could get well. I was using it to stay well, so I wasn't sick. I'm just trying to, uh, you know, to be able to get up out of bed." - Cory, Young heroin addict, FBI Film Chasing the Dragon

Graphic, but we need to hear this

- "At one point, I had an, um, abscess in my leg that was so bad, um, it, I had staph infection. Um, when the doctors cut my leg open to clean it out, um, I had maggots in my leg. That wasn't enough for me to quit." - Melissa, Heroin addict, FBI Film Chasing the Dragon.

### What can we do:

- start the conversation
- Help us Take it out of the closet
- Get information. Go to Town forums
- Talk to your *significant* others. Resources are available. 211 & The CDC (center for disease control)
- Don't flush drugs down the toilet. Trace amounts have been found in Lake Erie already
- **"Be a Hero" & help us all take up the Opioid Fight**
- DJ is going to tell you how you can help