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Rotarian Addreses the United Nations on Fighting Opioid Addiction



For Larry Kenemore, a prominent member of the Siloam Springs Rotary Club, things are going far beyond city limits. The Rotarian, who spoke at the United Nations in March, is the North American Rotary task force leader for the opioid crisis, a role he has been in for more than two years.

"We have a committee of five people, two of which are physicians, the other three involved in other areas, but all are Rotar-

ians and experts in their field," Kenemore said. "Because we are involved in the opioid crisis, we applied to have status at the United Nations due to it being a worldwide issue."

The U.N. ultimately accepted them. Kenemore said the Rotary Club has a plan, but he doesn't expect everyone to agree with it.

"Three years ago, Rotary began putting together research on a playbook that Rotary used to eradicate polio worldwide," Kenemore said. "We took that playbook and pretty well adapted it to the opioid crisis, using it to address the crisis in local communities, which is where this is meant to be implemented.

"The pushback from government agencies around the world is happening to Rotary for the opioid crisis, which is to be expected because it happened during polio. There have



been billions of dollars spent since 2009 by the government, on nonprofits and everything, here in the United States and literally across the world to solve the opioid crisis, and we are worse off today than we were in 2009."

Kenemore says that the problem is much deeper than most think.

"We also discovered in doing the research on the opioid crisis that there is pollution in our environment from people having leftover pharmaceuticals, throwing them in the trash, flushing them down the toilet," he said. "It's now in our drinking water, and there's no known process to remove it once it's there, so they're classified as 'forever chemicals' by the Environmental Protection Agency."

A retired paramedic, Kenemore spent 24 years in San Diego dealing with addicts.

"I gave Narcan back in 1976, when it first came out. It was under the rules of 'Mother May I,' meaning that you had to call and get permission to give Narcan. Everyone is carrying it around in their pockets now," he said.

Kenemore found his passion for helping addicts through a personal connection as well.

"I had a stepdaughter who was an alcoholic, and we lost her four years ago," he said. "She drank herself to death at 44 years old. Addiction, whether it's drugs, alcohol or whatever is a serious issue. We tried all kinds of things with her, and she refused every time.

"I realized then that there must be something wrong because we went to places to get her treatment or to help her. That's one of the things that Rotary is doing, we've built a database by local community of treatment and recovery that's available." Kenemore continued: "Rotary's big issue is that we have lost over a million people in 10 years to opioid deaths. But we actually have 2.6 million more addicts than we did 10 years ago."

Kenemore says that the key to all of these issues, from addiction to waste disposal, is to address it on a community level. "The issue is not the deaths itself, but the number of addicts keeps growing," he said. "That's where we are trying too, with our program that we have in individual communities, is to say, 'You need to work in your local communities to help those with addic-







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