

A REVIEW

Mental Health Month Opioid Conference

Awareness – Education - Solutions

It was not easy to keep this short – and that is a RESULT.

Awareness –

Thank you BI community – four events over the past two weekends with over 40 people at each - a different group each time as our island had many other happenings. We have shown we are aware. ***We can talk to each other*** about this difficult and tragic subject, hearing different perceptions and perspectives. We will continue the conversations.

Education –

Everyone who has given feedback had found they learned something. The keynote speaker Dr. Wartenberg has given us copies of his slides so if you wish they are available (ask at Island Free Library). Most importantly, information with which the Medical Center and Police department agree, is that ***opioid addictions can happen to anyone***; addictions are a health issue, not a crime, and are often nothing to do with nasty inadequate people and criminals in dark alleys (or rowdy illegal beach parties). Addiction begins far too frequently from prescribed drugs, legally developed and sold by pharmaceutical companies, and offered to patients for pain management, often very much needed pain management resulting from sport injury, dentistry, or chronic pain conditions. The opioids, those who use them, may be in our homes already.

From many insights, **prevention** comes under three headings:

- *Tertiary – problem is bad, keep it from getting worse*
- *Secondary – problem is mild or even just potential, keep it that way*
- *Primary - how to keep a problem from even happening*

Solutions –

It was extraordinarily hopeful to hear of ***many things already being done***, so in each of these areas, see the lists below, ***this is great information to be shared***. Hope and commitment too emerged over the course of the weekends with more ideas for things that we could do. See below where you, yes you, can pick the solution you can take part in.

That was a most rewarding result – everyone can do a bit, no one person or group has The Answer (there isn't one, no-one sees something that was prevented). This is a community that cares, that respects each other's differences, and when we share and communicate, we do well.

OPIOID PREVENTION on Block Island – information, ideas and commitments (applies also to other addictions and mental health, wellness.)

green – information, tell people, make sure everyone knows

red – can YOU take it forward, or join in? Training and help possible, contact NAMI BI or BI Wellness Coalition, BIHS, Police or other, for example, school or library.

Information:

Block Island Police have an EVERY day is a drug return day policy, for safe disposal, scrape off the name on the label

State Law - prescriptions for certain items are 20 days MAX – your clinician may suggest less is better

Clean out your medicine cabinet

Medical Center is engaged in a critical review – help them to help you – ask them how

RI Drug Court program is open to people charged with a non-violent alcohol or drug offense who might otherwise be sent to prison. Upon completion of a year of substance-abuse treatment, screenings, etc. graduates leave probation — and their record is expunged.

Information will be collected on the websites of NAMI BI, <https://blockislandmentalhealth.org/> and the BI Wellness Coalition, <https://blockislandwellness.org/>

make contact on the sites and send the info.

Commitments:

Kerri Gaffett will run a confidential “drop-in” center in her office above the Post Office. Try it.

Island Free Library is adding programs for 20 - 30 age range – and more.

Recognition of associated problems e.g. bullying, or other psycho-social issues such as isolation, loneliness, in all age ranges, and responses to trauma. Gateway drugs are considered to be alcohol and tobacco.

Whether pain and need for relief is physical or psycho-social, a way forward is “distraction” finding an interest.

Ideas: set up a parent group, run by parents for parents, to talk about common problems without blame and with respect for difference.

take up RI offer to train family facilitators – leaflets at library

consider mentoring programs

create recreation / community calendar, or a coalition to convene community meetings

Make use of facilities already present such as school – town support of school for open programs.

Convenors needed.

Activities:

BI Wellness Coalition – already works hard on Primary Prevention and education of young people, but would like to extend programming to other age ranges - needs Board members, and liaison with other groups, contact Jill Seppa.

Support and information sharing regarding programs, e.g Matt Bellace visits, suggestions for different age ranges.

Island Free Library – programs, support for teens and youth.

What BI does already, watch BIBB and On the Block:

Art classes: Heart Space, Island Bound, Spring Street Gallery

Drama and Film activities, BIMi summer program, Conserfest, etc.

Recreation and Sport

School friends activities.

Apologies for omissions – there will be many.

Public calendar, please send info to BI Chamber of Commerce who do try.