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OPINION ::

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Valpo acts positively to counter drug woes

Comments

December 8, 2009

Two hundred and seventy-seven. That's not a big number, until you learn that is how many ambulance calls were made in Porter County for drug overdoses in the first nine months of 2009.

That kind of statistic has prompted Valparaiso leaders to plan a new initiative to combat substance abuse in the city.

Eventually, they hope to spread the plan countywide.

The city also plans to spend \$100,000 in income tax revenue and is seeking \$50,000 in donations to fund the effort, showing it's more than just talk.

For a year and a half, Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas and his staff have talked about dealing with substance abuse in the community. The amount of time they took is reflected in the thoughtful, layered approach:

* The most important might be the Life Skills training, which shows children as young as 8 and all the way up to high school how to react to pressure.

But it's more than that. It teaches children about responsibility and consequences, lessons they can use in other classes and in life.

* Some of the city funding will pay for a full-time officer in Valparaiso High School.

* The city will create dropoffs, where adults can take leftover prescription drugs. Elliott Miller from Porter-Starke Services told the Post-Tribune editorial board that surveys indicate teenagers most commonly get drugs from their parents' medicine cabinets.

* Other parts of the initiative include city officials adopting schools, early screening of at-risk youths, drug-free work places and parenting classes.

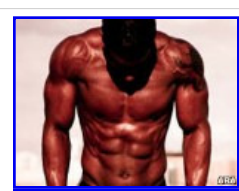
Porter County has taken tremendous strides in recent years in combatting this scourge.

Hopefully, Valparaiso can add to this fight with its effort of enforcement, treatment and education against substance abuse.

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