

Valpo ready to battle drug abuse

City will put \$100K toward new Life Skills Training program

- Story
- Discussion
- Image (3)

By Phil Wieland - phil.wieland@nwi.com, (219) 548-4352 | Posted: Wednesday, December 2, 2009 12:05 am | (15) Comments

Font Size:

Default font size

Larger font size



[Buy this photo](#)

JON L. HENDRICKS | THE TIMES Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas announces the city's Life Skills Training Program on Tuesday at the Porter County Administration Building. The program's goal is to combat drug abuse in the schools and other parts of the community. The city plans to use \$100,000 from its share of the county's economic development income tax to start the program.





VALPARAISO | The city is committing \$100,000 toward a program to combat drug abuse on multiple fronts in the schools and each segment of the community.

Mayor Jon Costas explained the program at a Tuesday afternoon news conference at the Porter County Administration Center, and he said the program has the support of Porter County officials like Commissioner Bob Harper.

Costas said he plans to form a task force in the next 30 days to help carry out the program, and the city is partnering with faith-based organizations, businesses, nonprofits and Porter-Starke Services in addition to the schools.

The Times is one of the partners in the effort. The newspaper will help by featuring parenting articles that correspond to the Life Skills Training Program, which will be introduced in the schools starting Jan. 16. It will be introduced at the sixth-grade level the first year and be expanded to the seventh grade during the 2010-11 school year and the eighth grade the following year.

"Valparaiso is a great community in which to live and raise your kids, but we have to be honest about our problems," Costas said in a meeting with The Times editorial staff. "We have limited resources, but we do have some, and the focus of the program will be education."

The city plans to use \$100,000 from its share of the county's economic development income tax to start the Life Skills Training Program, which has been successful in other areas of the country in reducing marijuana use and smoking among youths by up to 80 percent, studies have shown. Costas said grants will be sought to try to reduce the city's overall cost or to support the program in the future.

"We've been working on this for the last six months," he said. "We want to go beyond being a fit city to being a healthy city. It's a work in progress, but it's a work in earnest."

He told the large crowd of officials, health professionals and others at the conference that, "It's time for all hands on deck to get the message out that this is a problem and we are going to solve it."

Harper said, "I've seen a lot of good ideas that will get started here today."

He listed the efforts the county made over the past three years and warned that "not everything worked for us, but you have to keep going."

County Councilwoman Karen Conover said, "For the last 13 years we've been sounding the alarm to this problem, and it has gotten worse. We need to change the message to our youth because the current method is not working."

Actions the city plans to take include increasing the part-time officer position at Valparaiso High School to a full-time one in fall 2010; making the fire station at Vale Park and Cumberland Roads a drop-off site for unused prescription drugs; requiring all vendors doing work for the city on contracts more than

\$75,000 have a drug prevention and testing program; and stepping up enforcement of compliance by alcohol and tobacco retailers.

Porter-Starke will provide the training for those going into the schools and the community to teach the Life Skills Training Program. In the schools, it involves 30 sessions over three years and includes things like learning how to resist peer pressure to try drugs or other illicit substances. Elliott Miller, Porter-Starke's marketing and development specialist, said every dollar spent on the program saves \$11 in costs for law enforcement, rehab and other problems connected with drug and alcohol abuse.

The program also provides parenting skills and has components for training for day care, recreation and others who deal with youths. While taking a "clean up our own house first" approach, Costas said the city is meeting with leaders in other communities to see if they would be interested in taking on the program to spread it throughout the county.

Valparaiso will work with the Porter County Community Foundation to set up a fund managed by the foundation to be used to support the preventive activities outlined in the plan.

The introduction of the program was inspired in part by the fact Porter County has the highest per capita death rate from drug overdoses in the nation, and ambulances in the county are called upon to treat or transfer people suffering drug-related emergencies an average of once each day during the year.

Posted in Porter on *Wednesday, December 2, 2009 12:05 am* Updated: 10:45 pm. | Tags: Indiana, Education, Valparaiso, Nwsltr

Share This Story

Print Email ShareThis

Refinance Now at 4.1% Fixed

No hidden fees, 4.1% APR. No obligation. Get 4 free quotes. No SSN req.
MortgageRefinance.LendGo.com

Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance

(\$90,000 Refinance \$489/mo) See Rates - No Credit Check Req.
www.LowerMyBills.com/Refinance

Make Less Than \$45,000/Year?

Moms Urged to Go Back to School. Financial Aid Available.
www.ClassesUSA.com

Ads by Yahoo!

Latest Similar Stories

- North Judson soldier found without incident
- Harper defends tourism changes
- Still time to help GiftLift

- Only 9 days left until the big day!
- Rust heads to the Olympics
- Portage Pop Warner team places third in Nationals
- VU student group conducts suit drive
- Save the Dunes plans day to work at Trail Creek preserve

Popular Stories

- Books still not closed on one of Lake County's most notorious killings
- Woman drowns after car slides off I-94
- Former employee admits stealing \$150,000
- Hammond councilwoman, 53, dies at mother's home
- Man dies after driving into Lemon Lake
- Wrinkles executed for murdering wife, 2 others
- Police release new photo of missing man
- Firm asked for Cline Ave. limits a week before closure



MEET THE EXPERT
PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY



Dr. Desari and Dr. Kondamuri
Spinal Pain Experts
Midwest Interventional Spine Specialists

CLICK HERE FOR PROFILE