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Compact 2020 Director Alan Miller speaks at a Governance Council luncheon on Wednesday, Oct. 24 at Jefferson State Community College's Shelby-Hoover campus. (REPORTER PHOTO/STEPHEN DAWKINS)

Compact 2020 officials discuss progress, new leadership



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Published 1:53 pm Thursday, October 25, 2018

HOOVER – Compact 2020 officials reviewed progress at the partnership's two-year mark and introduced new leadership and initiatives at a Governance Council luncheon on Wednesday, Oct. 24.

Shelby County District Attorney Jill Lee welcomed those in attendance at Jefferson State Community College's Shelby-Hoover campus, including representatives of the Shelby County Commission, Shelby County Drug Enforcement Task Force, school systems, municipalities, police departments, fire departments and other local leaders.

Lee recalled a weekend phone call from Shelby County Manager Alex Dudchock that put into motion the formation of Compact 2020: "We have a drug problem; we have to do something."

Lee said Compact 2020 has "done a lot of good work" in two years, but drug dealers "are light years ahead of us."

“We have to work hard and be assertive,” Lee said. “Our goal is to not have drugs. Is that a lofty goal? Absolutely. But our children are dying.”

Compact 2020 Director Alan Miller said the organization addresses the full spectrum of substance abuse, and discussed several efforts over the past two years, including:

- Compliance checks. It used to be that a drug court participant who did not show up for court was not contacted by police for weeks or even months. Now, someone who does not attend court at 9 a.m. can be tracked down by 11 a.m. and brought before the judge later the same day.
- Adolescent substance use interventions. In 2017, Compact 2020 identified 136 juveniles likely involved in drug use and notified 31 parents. In 2018, those numbers have grown to 411 juveniles and 176 notifications.
- Partnering with parents. Miller highlighted the use of the Botvin Life Skills Curriculum, Parent University events, the utilization and training of School Resource Officers, social media campaigns, school counselor training, responsible vendor programs and community-based prevention teams.

Miller said parent notifications should be a primary focus for Compact 2020's future and announced that he was stepping down as director as part of this effort because Capt. Clay Hammac with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and Shelby County Drug Enforcement Task Force is uniquely equipped to handle that aspect of the program.

“This has been one of the most important assignments I've ever had,” said Miller, who will return to his role as chief assistant district attorney.

Hammac, who will assume the director's responsibilities as of Nov. 1, then began his address to those in attendance by sharing a story of his toddler running toward a body of water as he screamed for the child to stop.

“That is the position we are in in this season, in this generation,” Hammac said. “We are screaming out, listen to us, the direction you are going has dire consequences.”

Hammac said Compact 2020's goal will remain the same under his leadership. One of the partnership's most significant needs is the active participation of residents across the county, Hammac said.

“We want our citizens walking alongside and serving their neighbors,” he said.

Dudchock said the death of an 18-year-old in the Greystone community two years ago served as a catalyst for Compact 2020's formation.

“I can give you example after example of what was going on right among us,” Dudchock said.

Municipalities with populations of 5,000 people and above were the first to be approached about partnering with Compact 2020, and others will be coming on board, including all four local school systems.

Behavioral health services must be a focus going forward, Dudchock said.

The number of Shelby County deaths due to drugs ranged from 29 to 36 from 2012 through 2017, while in 2018 the number is nine with 10 pending toxicology reports to determine cause of death. Meanwhile, the Shelby County Drug Enforcement Task Force handled 433 investigations in 2017 and has already handled 709 in 2018.

Shelby County Sheriff John Samaniego called Compact 2020 “one of the most aggressive and on-point efforts” to combat drug use and urged continued support.

“It has grown, and we need to keep growing it,” Samaniego said.