

Coastal Point

"The Local Voice of Your Community"

(/)



The advertisement is a horizontal banner with a yellow background. On the left, there is a photograph of a two-story house with a porch. To the right of the photo, the word "RENTALS" is written in large, bold, red letters. Below it, in smaller black text, is "Vacation Rentals 1.800.732.7433". A vertical red line separates this from the right side of the banner. On the right side, there is a compass rose logo. To its right, the text "Crowley Associates Realty, Inc." is written in a serif font. In the bottom right corner of the banner, there are small icons for "iBANK" and a house icon.

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County council urged to 'Go Purple'

Thursday, September 27, 2018 - 3:25pm

The Sussex County Council this week was urged to ride a purple wave, as activists sought to officially add Sussex County to the areas of the state taking part in the "Goes Purple" campaign to address the opioid addiction epidemic.

"There's a significant national opioid epidemic," said Peggy Geisler, the executive director of the Sussex County Health Coalition. "Every county, every city in the state... But, specifically, hardest hit is the rural community," she noted.

"We have the same opioid epidemic rates as Wilmington, Del. Approximately 4 percent of the Sussex County population is addicted to opioids, and that is an underrepresentation."

Geisler informed the council that the non-profit — whose mission is to "engage the entire community in collaborative family-focused effort to improve the health of children, youth and families in Sussex County — works with 172 non-profit partners, itself has 606 members and makes outreach to more than 15,000 people through varying partnerships.

“We’re here to make sure Sussex Countians are the healthiest in the state and in the nation,” she told the council.

Geisler said the coalition has a comprehensive plan to address the opioid epidemic but wanted to bring the council’s attention to their awareness plan.

“What they’re not aware of is how we’re doing prevention services for our kids in the school districts, how are we doing treatment. Do we have enough beds? Do we have enough treatment providers? The answer is ‘No’ to all of that. You have to be aware of the problem, aware of the solutions before you can do anything about it.”

The organization is working with a number of school-related programs, including 4H.

She noted that the coalition has a mental-health collaborative established in four school districts in the county, with the Laurel School District not participating.

Currently, Botvin LifeSkills Training — an evidence-based substance abuse- and violence-prevention program used in schools and communities worldwide — is being used in some Sussex schools.

“We are increasing prevention services. We’d like to see every school have Botvin. A lot of schools are mandated by the school districts, and they do not follow through,” she said.

The group is hoping to increase awareness, increase services for addiction and recovery, and increase prevention activities and community support. They seek to decrease the use of substances by both youth and adults, and decrease opioid prescriptions.

The non-profit received a \$10,000 grant from Discover in 2017 and rolled it into a \$100,000 grant from Highmark. They later received a \$50,000 grant from the Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health.

Using Talbot County, Md., as a model, the coalition started working on a “Seaford Goes Purple Campaign,” urging people to “Take a stand against substance abuse.”

“Before we knew it, not only was Seaford ‘going purple,’ we had Sussex wanting to ‘go purple.’ Kent ‘went purple,’ and now New Castle wants to ‘go purple.’ So, we’ve ended up saying, ‘Delaware Goes Purple,’” said Geisler.

Delaware has the 13th highest fatal opioid overdose rate in the United States, and Geisler said something needs to be done.

“It’s a complex problem, and we need a complex solution,” she said. “Every sector is engaged — hospitals, law-enforcement — but we need more. We only have three staff members, and this is one project for our organization, so we need all of your help.”

Council President Michael H. Vincent said the County would discuss and possibly vote on having the county formally “go purple” at its next meeting.

“The message needs to get out,” he said. “It’s important that we step out and try to help.”

“Any way you want to be involved, we welcome you,” added Geisler.

For more information on Delaware Goes Purple, visit delawaregoespurple.org. For more information about the Sussex County Health Coalition, visit www.healthysussex.org (<http://www.healthysussex.org>). Anyone who is themselves or knows someone who is suffering from a

substance-use disorder can visit www.helpsherede.com (<http://www.helpsherede.com>) for resources and programs offered throughout the State of Delaware.

By Maria Counts

Staff Reporter

