



REENTRY TASK FORCE

SAM QUINONES SPEAKS



Sam Quinones, author of *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic*, made his sweep through Athens County this past week, tackling the bleak reality of how the nation's opiate epidemic spiraled out of control. The week-long event was made possible by Athens HOPE, Ohio University College of Health Sciences and Professions, OhioHealth/O'Bleness Hospital, & the Athens County Public Libraries.

The tour began Wednesday morning at Grover Center to speak with students, continued to Nelsonville-York High School in the evening for a community discussion, and ended with a forum for frontline professionals at the Athens Community Center on Friday. Sam provided a personalized examination of his award-winning journalistic writing, focusing primarily on the Appalachian community.

Sam also presented opportunity for a Q&A session at the end of his presentations. At the community discussion, an individual who has worked with several local community support programs shared her story of recovery which was met with a standing ovation by the audience. Sam remarked at the importance of such support. "Isolation is heroin's natural habitat. It's the most isolating thing. We have to get together as a community."

TASK FORCE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Jamie Northup is no stranger to helping others. She began her career with a degree in Human Services and Corrections from Hocking College and has a background in Criminal Justice from Ohio University – Chillicothe. She then completed an internship at Madison Correctional Institution before Working for Holzer Health Systems.



In March 2015, Jamie began her work at the Public Defender's Office. At the time, the position was funded through an Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG), a federal justice fund for state and local jurisdictions. As of this past July, the position expanded to being fully funded through the State of Ohio and Athens County. Her current Social Work position allows Jamie to assist clients in locating treatment (both inpatient and outpatient), alternatives to prison (Community Based Correctional Facility - CBCF's), housing, transportation, and employment. She is a proud advocate for why clients should receive treatment in lieu of prison.

As for a typical day in the field, Jamie spends the majority of her time in court where she completes referrals for treatment, requests medical records when necessary, and establishes bed dates for her clients. "The most rewarding aspect of my position is the feeling of actually helping someone make a difference in their life," Jamie said. "When housing is located for a homeless client, or meal is provided to someone who hasn't been able to eat, or clothes are handed to someone that has one to two outfits—that's rewarding!"

When asked what future opportunities would help the reentry population, Jamie hopes to see more transitional living facilities in the area. She also encourages the reentry process to begin in prison with individuals getting transitional housing already secured in addition to other services such as Medicaid. We thank Jamie for all of her amazing community efforts and dedication to reentry!

A SPECIAL TOWN HALL

Last week, the 317 Board held the 6th Annual Hocking County Opiate Town Hall Meeting in conjunction with the Hocking County Opiate Task Force. The event was well-attended by community partners including the Logan Police Department, Health Recovery Services, Integrated Services, Athens County Public Libraries, and many more. The highlight of the night was national award-winning author D'Anne Burwell, author of *Saving Jake: When Addiction Hits Home*. D'Anne shared her son's struggle with OxyContin that spiraled into heroin addiction, revealing the downwards spiral that many more in the country have endured. Her presentation explained that heroin is never a closed-door struggle and permeates deeply into families and communities. D'Anne now advocates for families struggling with substance abuse through radio commentaries, parent mentoring, and speaking engagements across the country.

During the Q&A session after D'Anne's initial presentation, several addiction service providers began an impromptu discussion of Vivitrol vs. Suboxone. This continues to be a topic of discourse depending on the provider's treatment preferences. Medication assisted treatment is very effective with the key being the participant engaging in therapy to address the underlying issues of addiction. Though there is no one perfected treatment or path to sobriety, it is increasingly important for open conversations in the community in addition to the hard and brave stories shared by those who have been affected by addiction.

Shawn Stover attended and was impressed with the presentations including the informational section provided by Amy Black a Nurse Practitioner in Logan Ohio. "She was very knowledgeable about Opioid addiction and the information presented was easy to understand" "I was also happy to see so many people from Athens County supporting our neighboring Hocking County. There was a large group of employees from SEPTA also in attendance and we were able to talk about our views on the event".

A big thanks and congratulations to the 317 Board and the Hocking County Opiate Task Force for organizing a great evening of community conversation and engagement.

REENTRY RANTS & RAVES

Madison Yee (AmeriCorps VISTA) and I went to several Reentry Fairs this month at the two branches of Southeastern Correctional in Lancaster and Nelsonville as well as Chillicothe Correctional. We spoke with hundreds of individuals at each facility with only about five to six coming back to Athens County. When a person is in a lonely, isolated place, they tend to become overexcited when they see someone from their area. The people who we spoke with from Athens about our Community and Reentry services were surprised and amazed that someone from Athens County would take the time to come to prison and reach out to them.

So, switching gears... You can imagine that if we see five to six people from Athens that the rest are from all over the state. We always strike up a conversation with each person that comes by our table and ask "Howdy, so where you heading back to?" with most saying "What?" because of my acquired Southern Ohio drawl. I hear "Montgomery-Cuyahoga-Franklin-Hamilton" and we share some small talk. If there is not a representative there from those counties due to the time and distance involved, they ask if I know of anything to help in their counties. We would talk about Ohio Means Jobs Centers in each county and give out a brochure with online info and a phone number.

Madison and I decided that this was not enough as people were looking forward to some help from the outside. She was able to put together a one-page information sheet containing reentry contact information and specific Ohio Means Jobs Center information for some of the large counties. These were very gratefully accepted by the people from those counties. We handed out over 200 copies of information to people outside of Athens County and some to other vendors. In the past I can remember that Fairfield County's Reentry Program also did something similar and an agency from Montgomery County had some extra information. Working as a team in Ohio Reentry is important to help those being released have a better chance of success.

-Shawn Stover, Reentry Coordinator

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next task force meeting will be on **November 27th, 2017 at 9:30AM** at the Athens County Job and Family Services County Home Office (13183 St Rt. 13 Millfield, Ohio 45761) in the conference room. See you there!

This newsletter was a collaborative publication between Athens Reentry Taskforce Chairperson Shawn Stover and Newsletter Editor AmeriCorps VISTA member Madison Yee working with the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) released on October 26th, 2017.