

January 10 Media Report

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Highland Countys Quick Response Team
unveiled

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Culbreath has already paid visits to a number of overdose survivors and offered them treatment resources. More entities and individuals are expected to join the QRT in coming months, organizers have said. Heather Gibson, president of the Highland County **DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION COALITION** and CEO of REACH for Tomorrow, a local nonprofit, introduced the group at the event Tuesday evening, which drew about 40 people. Many of those in attendance frequently attend monthly coalition meetings or are in some way involved in local **DRUG ABUSE** prevention activities. Also on hand at the event were Dr. Kelly Firesheets of Interact For Health and Carol Baden, an outreach specialist for the Ohio Attorney Generals Heroin Unit. Firesheets and Baden lauded the group for their commitment to fighting the opiate epidemic, and Firesheets said she has been impressed with Highland Countys efforts in the crisis. Look at this group of people, she said. I dont see this everywhere I know for you guys, its been a really long slog, but youre making a difference and doing really good work. Baden agreed. Highland County is crushing it, she said. Barrera said he has seen a steady increase in community involvement in the drug epidemic, especially with the Highland County **DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION COALITION**. The coalition, which was instrumental in the formation of the QRT, is a group of concerned citizens and officials who meet monthly to exchange ideas and resources for preventing local **DRUG ABUSE**. Manning said QRT members have their work cut out for them, since the Paint Creek district alone responded to more than 250 drug overdose calls in 2017. But, he said, Im excited to get started We look forward to being part of the team.

Im looking forward to serving in the Greenfield area because I know it works, she said. Bates said she believes one of the most important aspects of the QRT is that its members, including law enforcement, will be friendly faces to addicts, rather than an intimidating force. Gibson gave a brief outline of the **DRUG ABUSE** coalitions Community Plan, which highlights five specific areas on which local resources should be focused, including harm reduction, supply reduction, **DRUG ABUSE** prevention, treatment and advocacy. Gibson also fielded questions from the people in attendance, and discussion ranged from local treatment options to some of the more unpopular methods of fighting **DRUG ABUSE**. One such method, according to Warner, is a needle exchange program, which he described as the biggest political nightmare at the health department in Highland County. Warner and Firesheets said while they believe needle exchange programs are vital to staving off outbreaks of communicable disease, the idea has not been well-received here. As previously reported, Firesheets recently said the assembly of the QRT is somewhat of a second phase to naloxone distribution programs Interact for Health has sponsored another harm reduction method that has proved somewhat controversial. Naloxone, sold under the brand name Narcan, is a drug that reverses the effects of opiate overdose, and its free distribution to the public by the Highland County Health Department received mixed reviews. Some officials and community members have said giving naloxone away for free encourages **DRUG ABUSE** since it lessens the risk of dying from an overdose. Others, like Warner, have said any measure to prevent fatalities is worth the cost. Firesheets recently told The Times-Gazette that Narcan distribution itself actually does little to solve the overall drug problem, since many who overdose and are treated with Narcan tend to go right back to using opiates because of their addiction.

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