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## Fentanyl Victims Network of NC honors families, leaders who fight fentanyl traffickers

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From left, Michelle Gillikin, legal assistant with Prosecutorial District 4, Carteret County, NC Judicial Branch; Carteret County Sheriff Asa Buck; District Attorney Scott Thomas, Prosecutorial District 4; and Assistant District Attorney, David Spence hold their awards received Saturday from the Fentanyl Victims Network of NC for their efforts to stop fentanyl traffickers. (Contributed photo)

**BEAUFORT** — It was standing room only as more than 50 people attended the forum about fentanyl Saturday at the Beaufort Train Depot. Those attending have witnessed the devastation fentanyl causes as local victim families introduced their loved ones and shared the many fentanyl causes death.

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Barbara Walsh, executive director of the Fentanyl Victims Network of NC, who organized the gathering to honor those who lead the effort to stop fentanyl traffickers, said In many instances. Lethal fentanyl is ingested unknowingly. Fake prescription pills containing undisclosed fentanyl additives made to look like Adderall, Xanax, Percocet and Oxycontin are deadly.

“The victims did not know,” she said.

The pharmacy is the only safe dispenser of prescription medication. Recreational drugs also may contain undisclosed deadly fentanyl additives because it is a cheaper man-made ingredient.

Fentanyl is highly addictive. A person’s body can quickly become dependent on fentanyl. Local recovery and treatment resources are offered by Brooke Barnhill, manager of the Post Overdose Response Team (PORT) within the Carteret County Health Department.

Fentanyl has killed 18,959 North Carolina residents in 10 years, 2013-2023. Of those, 168 occurred in Carteret County.

Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina honored the #1 NC investigation and prosecution team by presenting them with the Save Lives Together award: Sheriff Asa Buck, District Attorney Scott Thomas, Prosecutorial District 4 (Carteret, Craven and Pamlico Counties), Assistant District Attorney Dave Spence, Carteret County and Legal Assistant (Paralegal) Michelle Gillikin, all of Carteret County.

Walsh said in the state, there are 37 NC Sheriffs who have no fentanyl investigation arrests leading to prosecution and four NC District Attorneys who have no prosecutions.

The removal of fentanyl traffickers who cause death requires teamwork. The Sheriff treats each death as a homicide investigation until proven otherwise. If the investigation leads to a prosecution, ADA Spence and LA Gillikin apply their extensive legal expertise to each case.

Walsh said victims and their families are treated with dignity and respect throughout the investigation and prosecution phases. This is unique to Carteret County.

“It should not matter where a person dies in NC to receive an investigation and justice, but it does,” she said

Walsh thanked Shannon Adams for serving as the local co-host of the event. Shannon's brother, Ryan, thought he was dependent on Percocet, yet died in 2019 from undisclosed fentanyl additives in those pills.

Shawne Moran and Keenan, First Responder Therapy Dogs of Eastern North Carolina, were on hand to comfort the victim families and to discuss what they do to support recovery efforts in Carteret County.

For more information, visit [www.fentvic.org](http://www.fentvic.org) or email [info@fentvic.org](mailto:info@fentvic.org) to connect with local fentanyl victim families.