

County hosts coaches to discuss drugs

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Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery Outreach Coordinator Charlotte Reeves, guest of honor Kathy Freeman, and local advocate Melissa Mundy pose for a photo at a substance abuse awareness seminar in Dobson, May 4.

The Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery hosted its first ever Sports and Drugs Awareness seminar last week in Dobson. Inside were dozens of coaches, educators, and members of the community to discuss substance use disorder and what role coaches can play in stemming the tide of drugs in Surry County.

Drug Enforcement Administration Agent Chuvalo J. Truesdell was the keynote speaker for the event that also featured track coach and Olympian Kathy Freeman who offered her perspective.

Not only a specialized member of federal law enforcement, Truesdell is a former college athlete having played on a football scholarship to North Carolina Central University and has a son playing football at Vanderbilt University.

Based in Atlanta, he is the community outreach coordinator of the Atlanta Field Division where he oversees all prevention activities also in his three-state area of responsibility of Georgia and the Carolinas.

Ditch the pills



Special Agent Chuvalo J. Truesdell of the Drug Enforcement Administration explains that counterfeiters will add nearly any ingredient to the mix when making a fake pill, adding to the already high danger of buying illicit prescription drugs.



Charlotte Reeves of Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery is seen chatting with Surry County Schools Superintendent Dr. Travis Reeves.

friends with a soccer player from Stanford who committed suicide even though she was a national champion and well connected.

Signals of need were missed in that case; the student athlete did not come to reach that final solution just that day. She said that even college cheerleaders are feeling such high pressure that it is leading to suicides.

Freeman said missing those signs can be avoidable with one-on-one coaching, mentoring, and listening. "Communication, you always fall back to communication, and I know that being a coach it's 110% every freaking day."

"But the key to communication is you listen to your athlete, I mean, truly listen, don't while they are talking think of somewhere to break their point down, or tell them do this, and do that. No, because everybody is different."

Instead, she said that coaches need to attempt to find out what is the issue the athlete is dealing with, "And then you help them as a parent, or a role model and help them learn how to make a solution for what their problem is."

Good Samaritan Laws

Agent Truesdell had a request, "Coaches, I want you to talk to you student athletes about North Carolina's Good Samaritan law. What does that mean? You've heard of two students getting high, one of the students while getting high gets in trouble because they have an overdose."

One of the best ways that parents and coaches alike can help students is to control the intake of prescription pain pills. "There is a lot going on in America right now with people that are abusing prescription drugs for non-medical reasons."

Truesdell said, "Let's say you have oral surgery, and you may have 30 pain pills in that bottle. But let's think about it, you may use two, you have 28 pills left. So, someone can take that pill, crush it and snort it and you have no idea."

He explained, "If you're taking an opioid for pain, you need to wean off that opioid as quickly as you can. You might need it aggressively a day or so after surgery but get rid of that opioid that let's say the second day, the third day," he said to look for the first chance to transition over to an over-the-counter pain reliever and then to get rid of the rest of those pills.

He said that some studies have shown it can take as little as seven days to develop an addiction to opioids. "So I always tell parents take if the kid might need it the day of surgery, maybe the day after, but wean them because we know it was a lie that these pills were not addictive."

"Two hundred and ninety-five people are dying a day from drug overdose, if an airliner went down every single day with that many people on it, it would be big news. But we're not hearing about the scores of people that are dying every day from opioids," he said.

"Just so you all know, every April and October DEA has what's called a prescription drug take back event to take the unneeded, unwanted, and expired medications out of circulation," he said, because studies show that kids will snatch leftover prescriptions right from home. Mount Airy has a disposal bin at police headquarters and there is also one located inside the pharmacy in Walmart on Rockford Street.

Listening, watching for signals

Kathy Freeman was an Olympic level runner and hurdler, an accomplished coach, and mother of a college athlete. Her daughter is a soccer player and was

“Instead of the other student helping and calling 911, they freak out and the student ends of dying. Please tell your student-athletes that this law is in place to provide a person that calls and gets the other person help, it provides them immunity to being prosecuted.”

He said this knowledge is critical and potentially lifesaving. “Your average young person is going to freak out, they’re gonna’ say, ‘I’m not calling the police, I’m not going to jail.’ So, make sure you at least mention the Good Samaritan Law.”

Having these laws on the books matters because, “We live in perilous times when it comes to drug experimentation.”

He said it is Russian Roulette to buy any pill off the street because there is absolutely no guarantee that what someone is sold is what they may be ingesting. At home pill labs are churning out fake pills of all stripes and sorts, and Mister Wizard these nefarious characters are not.

Whatever is on the shelf, or under the sink, can be ground down to a powder and can be mixed into a fake pill and this included the lethal fentanyl. “Think about a batch of chocolate chip cookies. When you make a batch of chocolate chip cookies, do you measure each cookie or each type of chip that goes into that cookie? No one cookie will have ten, one will have eight.”

Coaches have a unique chance to influence their athletes, many of whom are in need whether they show it or not. “You’re a big part of Surry County kid’s lives and every athlete you have is going to have a friend or a loved one with a problem. My kid is not immune to it, neither is yours,” Neil Atkins of Surry County Schools said.

Charlotte Reeves, outreach coordinator for the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery, said that some students, “Can’t remember every teacher’s name, but many do remember every coach’s name... so think about the impact you can have in the life of a child.”