

The Logan Daily News  
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by Judge Richard Wallar

## Help, heal those with substance use disorders

People who are using and abusing drugs and alcohol can be successfully treated and go on to lead productive, healthy lives. Some people believe that abusing alcohol or drugs is a personal weakness that can be easily discontinued; however for those people who are addicted it is a long and arduous struggle. It is important that we require people to take responsibility for their actions and to seek help; but we can also be a vital part of a family member or friend's recovery by confronting them with the problem that we recognize and offering to help them fight their addiction.

Addiction is a medical condition that can be treated like any other illness. The 2008 expansion of the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996, provides equity in the coverage of mental health and substance use disorders. It is important for us to educate (younger and older) people about addiction and the benefits of treatment and recovery by sharing this message online and offline.

I have served as a Judge in the Hocking County community for over 13 years and presided over a Drug Court for nine of those years, and I have firsthand knowledge of this reality. Addiction is a real issue, with an estimated 23.2 million people needing treatment for an alcohol or other illicit drug use problem in 2007. Locally, approximately 20 percent of juveniles on probation in Hocking County have participated in substance abuse treatment and education. However there is a shortage of counseling and treatment and recovery services. In fact, only 3.9 million people nationwide received some kind of treatment for an alcohol- or drug-related problem in 2007; millions of others did not get help, partly due to shame relating to their addiction.

This September in celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> annual National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and its Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). I am asking you to inform yourself and educate others about this serious problem and encourage people in crisis to access treatment and recovery services. We can give teachers resources to support children who need help for their own or a family member's addiction; open communication lines through our everyday social and work interactions; and provide the media with up-to-date, accurate scientific information about addiction, treatment, and recovery to dispel the myths.

We can also do this online. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, approximately 75 percent of adult Americans use the Internet to search for health information online. The Internet can be a great medium for educating our community about substance use

disorders, treatment, and recovery. To maximize this opportunity, I urge local churches, businesses, government agencies, and community agencies, and community organizations to showcase details about local treatment and recovery resources on their Web sites and link to additional information available at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

Additionally, the Internet can provide a safe haven for people who may be afraid to publicly voice their struggle with a substance use disorder. They may find support and treatment services through social networking sites, chat rooms, and organization listserves: resources that remind them that they are not alone. These online tools also may direct people to valuable face-to-face support meetings. Another important resource is SAMHSA's 24-hour national helpline for information and treatment referrals, 1-800-662-HELP.

If you are not comfortable with a website or feel like you need more information in person, our local treatment providers are good resources. Hocking County Behavioral Health Services or Tri-County Mental Health can help you deal with your concerns.

Local treatment providers contact information:

Hocking County Behavioral Health Care Services

- 385-9895 (377 Front Street) or 380-6354 (12896 Grey Street)

Tri-County Mental Health and Counseling Services

- 385-6594 (541 St. Rt. 664N, Suite C)

Two area Churches: Cornerstone Baptist Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church have programs designed for individuals struggling with drug and/or alcohol addiction.

Drug and alcohol Addiction negatively affects our entire community. Together we can help people, families, and our community – together we can learn about addiction and begin to heal.