



I recently attended a prescription drug summit sponsored by the Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance and was shocked by what I learned. The prescription drug problem in the U.S. has reached epidemic proportions, and I wanted to take this opportunity to bring some of what I learned to this community in the hope that through education and awareness; lives might be saved.

You may or may not know that prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S. According to a 2010 study, there are 2.4 million new users of prescription drugs for NON-medical use annually. That is over 6,000 new users per day, and what is most shocking is that the ages of those users are between 12 and 17. I can't help but wonder how many of those are from Stockbridge. Even more alarming is the fact that one person dies of a prescription drug overdose every 19 minutes in the U.S.

One of the contributing factors for these horrific statistics is obviously accessibility. Our kids have way-to-easy access to prescription drugs simply because almost everyone has them in their households, and almost no one (that I have heard at least) locks them up or keeps them in a place inaccessible to others. This easy access can quickly lead to addiction, and when the access to prescription drugs is interrupted or cut off; then the users are moving to Heroin. Evidence of this is that since 2008, Heroin use has gone up 50%. Heroin dealers will move into areas where prescription drug use is on the rise because they know odds are that the users will transition to Heroin; which inevitably leads to an increase in crime for communities and the greater potential for overdose. According to the presenters at this summit, the people most likely to overdose come from low-income families living in rural areas. Certainly, many families in this community fit into this category.

So, what can we do as a community? As I previously stated, we can educate folks. The more awareness people have of the potential dangers of prescription drug use and abuse, the safer we will be. The four focus areas for abuse prevention are: Education, monitoring programs, proper disposal of prescription drugs, and of course; enforcement. You should all be aware of some of the warning signs of abuse or addiction. Some include missing money and valuables, missing spoons (used to heat Heroin), arrests for theft, finding needles or orange needle caps, burnt bottle caps, small plastic bags or foil, constantly asking for money, lying and manipulating or stealing, behavioral and/or physical changes, just to name a few. Parents should trust their instincts when it comes to their children. If any of these are occurring seek immediate help. By now I hope everyone is aware that the Stockbridge Police Department has a drop box for unused or unwanted controlled substances in our lobby, and SPD will continue to work

hard at taking enforcement actions against criminal activity related to prescription drugs. Area health care providers, parents, schools and community leaders must work together to educate the public. SPD will assist in any way it can. Community resources are also available through Families Against Narcotics (FAN) of Ingham County. Please visit their website for more information at [www.familiesagainstnarcotics.org](http://www.familiesagainstnarcotics.org). I would also encourage you to visit the Srsly (text for seriously) Stockbridge Coalition's website at [www.srslystockbridge.org](http://www.srslystockbridge.org) or call them at 734- 593 5279. Additional information can be found through the Office of National Drug Control Policy by going to [www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp](http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp).

The only way we can combat this epidemic is by working together as a community. Everyone has a stake in the fight. If you would like to know more about the information provided, please don't hesitate to contact SPD at 517-851-7517. I hope everyone has a safe and joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,

Chief Torres