



**“We Can Reverse Substance Abuse and Crime Trends in Our Community.”**

All of us have someone in our family, friends or associates who have tragically fallen into the depths of addiction, crime, and often homelessness. Often the addiction is combined with severe mental health issues which in the absence of effective care make it virtually impossible for an individual to overcome the condition. The issue of addiction cuts across all of our major social issues; education, crime and unemployment. In fact approximately 80% of all arrests in Detroit include a drug charge!

This is not a new issue and has plagued our community for decades. Our approach as a community during this period has been to view the problem strictly as a law enforcement issue. Numerous community opinion studies indicate that when posed with the question of what is needed to address substance abuse issues in our community they have resulted in the same response; INCREASE LAW ENFORCEMENT. With this as the primary approach prisons are full of our friends, family and neighbors because they suffer from the disease of addiction.

WHAT IF WE CHANGED OUR APPROACH? I have the pleasure of working on a couple of truly powerful projects as a substance abuse prevention professional that has the potential to change how we address this problem and reverse the horrific trends we currently experience.

A collaboration of the Health Dept, Police, Courts, Prosecutor and Jails are exploring an innovative approach to the problem of addiction and crime where known drug users would be picked up on outstanding warrants and offered the choice of treatment or jail. If they fail to complete treatment or run, police would stand ready to quickly pick them up again, some jail time would be served to inspire them to stay on the program, and they would again be offered the opportunity for treatment.

A targeted approach such as this would have an immediate effect on neighborhood crime levels by removing drug users from the community, getting them the help they desperately need, and avoid sentencing them to a permanent life of poverty by avoiding long-term incarceration, and a felony record, which at this time makes it impossible to achieve meaningful employment.

It is my belief that we need innovative approaches like this to address long standing problems and to affectively address crime and substance abuse without creating other equally damaging problems. Let's Save our Children and Community!! WOULD YOU SUPPORT STATE FUNDING FOR SUCH AN APROACH? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

