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County Manager
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County Attorney
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Pender County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse Summary Report

The Pender County Leadership Forum on Opioid Abuse was held Tuesday, August 29, 2017 from 2:30-5:30 p.m. at the Burgaw Train Depot. Nearly 75 stakeholders were in attendance. County Manager, Randell Woodruff, welcomed all those in attendance. George Brown, Chair, Pender County Commissioners, explained the purpose for the forum. He noted that the President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners encouraged all counties to conduct an event and Mr. Brown identified some of the goals for the forum:

1. To elevate the awareness of all local elected officials so they may have a common understanding of the opioid epidemic in their county.
2. To discuss its causes, its effects on citizens and its implications for the county's future.
3. To educate local elected leaders about successful prevention and treatment programs and provider resources available in their county.
4. To generate coordinated education, prevention and treatment strategies to reduce the occurrence of opioid addiction, overdose and death.

Dr. Joseph Pino, MD, presented a historical perspective of opioid abuse and how it evolved. He reviewed the impact of opioids in Pender County in regards to Narcan use and Emergency Room visits for overdoses from 2015 to 2017. A professional panel followed that included Carolyn Moser, Health and Human Services Director; Woody Sullivan, Chief, Pender EMS and Fire; Sheriff Carson Smith; Samantha Nixon, DSS Supervisor, Child Welfare; Chief District Court Judge J.H. Corpening; and Kenny House, Vice-President of Clinical Services for Coastal Horizons. Each professional shared the impact opioids is having on their agency and Pender County along with their roles in this epidemic.

Two individuals shared their personal journeys with family members addicted to opioids and their desires to educate the community. Each has established a non-profit program. One offers education and awareness to students, parents, and community members. The second person has renovated a building that offers post-recovery support for men.

District Attorney Ben David presented the effect of opioid abuse on the region. He described the court system and the importance of recognizing that those with addictions suffer from health problems and are not criminals. He noted that the community needed to work together to battle the epidemic: Faith, Business, Non-Profits, Schools, and Government.





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Finally, Olivia Herndon with the Southeast Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC) and a Penderlea graduate, explained a regional effort that has been in place for nearly two years. The focus is: Awareness and Education; Access to Care; Support Systems; and Crisis Response. She facilitated a full group discussion about the gaps or challenges Pender County is facing to better address the opioid epidemic.

Using the four areas of focus listed above, those in attendance identified the following:

1. Awareness and Education-

- ✓ Stigma associated with Substance Use Disorders
- ✓ Mental Health Awareness
- ✓ Prevention Education for Youth
- ✓ Community Education about Substance Use Disorders
- ✓ Proper Disposal of Medications; Do Not Share Medications

2. Access to Care

- ✓ Transportation Assistance
- ✓ Access to Treatment Programs, Residential and Special Populations
- ✓ Increase Recovery Homes
- ✓ Increase in Refuge and Celebrate Recovery Programs in the County

3. Support Systems

- ✓ Funding for Incineration of Medications
- ✓ Funding for Treatment
- ✓ Increase in Employment Opportunities
- ✓ Increase Collaboration Among County and Community Agencies

4. Crisis Response

- ✓ Explore the Development of a Quick Response Team in Pender County
- ✓ Promote Treatment, Not Incarceration for Many Offenders

Commissioner Brown informed the audience that the commissioners are committed to addressing this epidemic. He asked the health department to lead future efforts. Mr. Brown thanked everyone for their attendance.

