



Beyond Parody: Drug Addiction Numbers Do Not Lie, Methamphetamines Make Roaring Comeback In Area

by Ty Bechel
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Beyond Parody

Drug and alcohol addiction are well known. Some people are tired of hearing or reading about it. Some are tired of a broken system that is supposed to provide care and treatment for those that need it. The argument can be the one struggling with addiction did it to themselves and should have to pay the ultimate price – death or prison. Sure. Tell that to a wife whose spouse used to work 9-5 but fell down the rabbit hole of addiction and drank alcohol until their liver became a worthless piece of real estate.

Someone can drink so much alcohol over a period of time that their liver can no longer function properly, and as a result, the person develops esophageal varices (caused by blockage of blood flow to the liver) or pancreatitis. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), alcoholic liver disease deaths claimed 22,246 human lives and alcohol-induced deaths claimed another 35,823 in 2017.

And this is just alcohol. What about opiate addiction? The Illinois Department of Health reports that opioid overdose deaths decreased for the first time in 5 years in 2018, but there has been a 0.5% increase in opioid overdose deaths in 2019. The Madison County Coroner's 2019 Annual Report reflects drug-related deaths made up 51% of all accidental deaths. Not to mention, methamphetamines have also made a roaring comeback to the Riverbend area.

When someone has spent time on the front lines and witnessed how damaging addiction is to the mind, body, and soul, there is an epiphany that drug and alcohol addiction may be one of the greatest threats to humanity. While society sneers at the population that is suffering, we have to ask ourselves, where do we stand as a community?

According to the Madison County Coroner's Office, there were 28 overdose deaths as of May 2020 and in Aug. 2020 there are 55 overdose deaths with a few pending toxicology reports to confirm the cause of death. That is a monthly average of 7 overdoses since the beginning of 2020.

Addiction wants everything from the individual. It wants society to turn its back on them. It wants to make their parents banish them from their homes. It wants to starve them. It wants them to hate themselves to the point they feel they have no other option than go on to the bitter end. This is certainly dramatic, but then again, it is not; addiction wants to create a labyrinth of fire and brimstone with no escape. It wants to cut off any connection to anything purposeful that every human being deserves. It wants to turn our communities against one another.

I have been asked to write this column to discuss what is taking place in the community about drug and alcohol addiction and what family, friends, and individuals can do to seek help and guidance. The numbers don't lie. The people that died were someone's child. We can no longer deny that we are hurting as a community. This is not a parody; this is real life. It is safe to say it is time to heal.

Ty Bechel is executive director of Amare, a recovery organization for individuals and families who suffer from addiction issues and host of a podcast Recovery Uncensored, and a social media video series, Madison County Informed. He also works for an area hospital.