

Website shows where to find help amid opioid crisis

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- MEDINA TWP. — An average of eight people die each day in Ohio due to
- drug overdoses.

In fact, overdose has become a leading cause of death in Ohio, according to the Ohio Department of Health, which recorded 4,854 unintentional overdose deaths in its 2017 report.

However, when it's time for people to reach out for help, sometimes they don't know where to turn. That's where the Emerald Jenny Foundation is trying to help.

EmeraldJennyFoundation.org, went live May 14, 2017, the birthday of founder and President Bill Ayars' daughter. Jenny Ayars died of a drug overdose in February 2016 at age 28.

Bill Ayars admits he was ill-equipped to deal with his daughter's drug addiction. He told the Medina County Drug Task Force on Friday at the Medina County Health Department that he first tried to ignore her problems.

Eventually, she succumbed to her demons.

When paramedics showed up, they didn't have naloxone. They were able to resuscitate her, but she had been out too long.

Her family circled around Jenny's bed at the hospital and waited for her to die, said Susan Tarry, Bill Ayars' fiancée.

After she passed, Ayars knew he had to do something. That's when the idea for the website surfaced. He created the nonprofit foundation and assembled a board.

Emerald Jenny Foundation helps people struggling with addiction by providing an online, searchable database of treatment facilities and support resources in Ohio.

Ayars said at first, the foundation was going to focus on Cuyahoga County — it's based out of Bay Village — but it broadened to encompass Northeast Ohio. Now, it features listings for treatment facilities and resources in the entire state.

"We track down what's available and categorize the options," Ayars said.

Its list of 1,400 providers is constantly updated. Tarry said the organization calls providers every six months.

"It's constantly changing," she said. "Some go out of business."

The Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services noticed the work the foundation was doing and asked to partner with it. It now links to the foundation on its website.

"It gave us so much credibility," Ayars said.

When people log onto the website, they enter their ZIP code and city, and treatment providers in a 10-mile radius will show up. They can also expand their search to 25 miles and more.

"We're here to keep you informed," Tarry said.

Ayars said they got 57,000 page views last month.

Tarry said the organization has six people on its staff, including a social media specialist. Everyone works remotely from home.

The website offers information on addiction-recovery organizations in Medina County including The LCADA Way, Alternative Paths, and Cathy's House, a residence program for men and women recovering from addiction.

The work to fight the drug epidemic in the county continues in various ways and Friday's meeting of the Opiate Task Force also discussed the acquisition of about 600 Deterra bags and plans to distribute them to county residents.

The Deterra Drug Deactivation System is used to safely dispose of unused medications in the home.

The patented system prevents the misuse of leftover drugs and protects the environment. Drugs that are flushed down the toilet or thrown in the trash can cause issues with the environment.

They are manufactured by Minneapolis-based Verde Technologies Inc.

Warm water must be added to the bag, which deactivates the chemical compound of the prescription drugs. People can then just drop the bag into the trash. The bags are biodegradable.

The task force is devising a plan on distributing the bags to the public, said Christy Rickbrodt, the Health Department's health promotions and planning supervisor.

"There's not a wrong way to distribute," said Cindy McQuown, who works on the task force's subcommittee.