



SPECIAL EDITION

ELK GROVE Villager



IN THIS ISSUE:

A Message from the Police Chief: Elk Grove Police Will Assist Addicts Seeking Help, but Remain Tough on Drug-Related Crime

When Families Suffer from the Disease of Addiction

Overdose-reversing Medication to be Made Available in Public Spaces

ELK GROVE VILLAGE CARES: A COMPREHENSIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGY TO TACKLE THE OPIOID ADDICTION EPIDEMIC



At a press conference last month, Elk Grove Village officials launched a comprehensive, community-based approach aimed at reducing the number of heroin and opioid-related deaths, connecting addicts and their families to treatment programs and counseling, and educating residents about the devastating effects that opioid addiction can have on people, families and communities.

Elk Grove Village Cares is a first-of-its-kind approach that incorporates five primary components: a more compassionate approach by law enforcement, partnerships with local substance abuse treatment providers, placing overdose-reversing medication in public places to help overdose victims, strengthening the support network in Elk Grove Village through follow up from social workers and alliances with inter-faith organizations, and a public education program aimed at removing the stigma attached to families and those suffering from opioid addiction.

Readers can learn more about some of the specific aspects of Elk Grove Village Cares inside this special edition newsletter.

“The disease of addiction, especially addiction to heroin and opioids, not only tears at the fabric of families, it tears at the very fabric that holds communities together,” said Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson. “A community-wide problem demands a community-based solution, and Elk Grove Village is taking the lead by creating vital partnerships to support those impacted by opioid addiction and their family members.”

Continued on page 2

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The Village Hall is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for payment of water bills, local fines, pet licenses, vehicle stickers and general Village information. In addition, the Finance counter is open on the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and the Community Development counter is open on the first Saturday of the month of May through September from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Village Board meetings are generally held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.



ELK GROVE VILLAGE LAUNCHES COMPREHENSIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGY TO TACKLE OPIOID ADDICTION EPIDEMIC

Continued from page 1

Village officials understand that the road to recovery for opioid addicts is often marked with setbacks and relapses, so they are tasking the Village social services staff with conducting aggressive and frequent follow up with individuals who enter treatment via Elk Grove Village Cares.

Looking for help with a substance abuse problem? Contact Elk Grove Village or any of our treatment partners for guidance on how to access top-quality compassionate treatment for the disease of addiction

Amita Health:

877-262-5048

www.amitahealth.org/addiction

Gateway Foundation:

877-505-4673

www.recovergateway.org

Leyden Family Service & Mental Health Center:

847-882-4148

www.leydenfamilyservice.org

Elk Grove Village Police Department:

901 Wellington Avenue

elkgrovevillagecares@elkgrove.org

847-357-4100

“It’s not enough to simply get these men and women into treatment, then walk away. Elk Grove Village Cares is about a community’s compassion for those who are struggling with addiction while also making sure they know we’re there for them at every turn to aid in their recovery,” said Mayor Johnson.

Because many addicts seeking help lack the necessary insurance to gain access to quality care, the Village is also exploring how it can provide Medicaid enrollment assistance to addicts.

As part of the FY2019 budget, the Village Board has approved adequate funding to support the creation of Elk Grove Village Cares. The funds will be used to purchase Narcan kits, provide assistance to individuals seeking recovery services, and to educate Elk Grove Village residents about the disease of addiction and the stigma that is attached to addiction.

“With Elk Grove Village Cares now launched after a year and a half of study, it is important that our community understand that this is not the end of our work to combat opioid addiction here in Elk Grove Village. Rather, it is the

beginning of our commitment,” said Mayor Johnson. “This program will grow and evolve based on what works and what doesn’t. The bottom line is that Elk Grove Village Cares signifies our promise to our community to face this challenge head on. To learn more about Elk Grove Village Cares, please visit our website at www.elkgrove.org.

WHEN FAMILIES SUFFER FROM THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION

Sue is a 19-year old Elk Grove Village resident and overachiever. Growing up she was always involved in sports and theater. She was active at school and in the community. While attending Elk Grove High School, her AP and honors courses challenged her, but she managed to work hard and succeed. Sue (not her real name) was like every other kid facing the same challenges that any teenager in any community faces: pressure to succeed academically, managing a busy schedule crammed with homework and extracurricular activities, and navigating a world where social media plays an exaggerated role in the social lives of young adults.

During her sophomore year, Sue sought counseling to help her manage her anxiety and depression. When the drugs she was prescribed didn’t smooth out the rough edges enough, she turned to alcohol, pot and eventually found what became her drug of choice—benzodiazepine (benzo). Benzo is highly addictive and places its users in a sedated, often hypnotic state.

After her parents intervened and urged her to seek treatment, Sue participated in several inpatient and outpatient programs. She is in recovery today, is holding down a steady job, but has a long road ahead of her. Sue’s battle with addiction will continue every day for the rest of her life.

“She’s making real progress, but she is also still struggling,” says her mother, Kathy.

Kathy’s journey with Sue has turned many lights on. It has changed the way Kathy sees drug abuse. “Addiction is not a choice. Addiction is a brain disease, plain and simple. And, we need to treat addiction like a disease.”

Kathy and mothers who have lost their sons and daughters tragically raised their voices in an effort to raise awareness of that addiction can strike any child, in any community or in any school. She says that the stigma can be debilitating.

“You don’t tell people what your family is going through because they look at you like you did something wrong,” said Kathy. “Instead of shunning addicts and their families, we need to get it out in the open and recognize this problem for what it is - a disease.”

Earlier this year, these mothers heard Mayor Craig Johnson speak about the need to address the rising opioid problem in the community and felt this was an opportunity to share their experiences. Mayor Johnson met with mothers and listened to their heartbreaking stories.

“These mothers who have endured such sadness and pain, are the heroes behind our efforts to save lives, get addicts on the road to recovery and to end the stigma that is attached to the disease of addiction,” said Mayor Johnson. “The ideas we got from Elk Grove Village moms have formed the backbone of Elk Grove Village Cares. They have been involved from day one and their ongoing input and feedback will help us keep our strategy on the right path.”

A MESSAGE FROM THE POLICE CHIEF: ELK GROVE POLICE WILL ASSIST ADDICTS SEEKING HELP, BUT REMAIN TOUGH ON DRUG-RELATED CRIME



Our police officers and firefighters have seen first-hand the devastating impacts heroin and opioid addiction can have on individuals, families and communities. We’ve urged the addicted to get clean. We’ve pulled addicts from the edge of death by administering overdose-reversing medication. And, we’ve supported innocent victims of drug-related crimes by investigating burglaries, thefts and other crimes. In many ways, the national opioid crisis is not a crime issue at all—it’s a public health emergency that requires a new, compassionate approach. No police department is going to arrest its way out of this problem. The place for individuals suffering from addiction isn’t in the criminal justice system, it’s in recovery.

That’s why, effective immediately, anyone seeking help with an addiction problem can take that crucial first step by showing up at the Elk Grove Village Police Department and asking for help. All of our officers have been trained on this new policy, so every officer will be ready and equipped to help. When someone shows up at the Elk Grove Police Department seeking help for their addiction, they will not be arrested, but will be connected with treatment. An officer will ask them to hand over any illicit drugs and paraphernalia and will make sure they are safe and comfortable. The officer will work with our recovery and treatment partners to find a facility that can admit the individual, and will then take them directly there.

Make no mistake, the Elk Grove Village Police Department will continue tough enforcement on criminals who sell drugs and commit crimes in support of their habits. We will work, as we do every day, to hold drug offenders those who place our families, our children and our community in harm’s way accountable. But we will not turn away anyone who is ready to take on the disease of addiction by getting clean.

Compassion is the fuel that behind Elk Grove Village Cares. On behalf of every Elk Grove Village police officer and first responder, we are proud to play a role in a program whose focus is on saving lives, saving families and keeping our community healthy and strong. - Chief Charles Walsh

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OVERDOSE-REVERSING MEDICATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE IN PUBLIC SPACES

Just like many communities in the Chicago area and nationwide, Elk Grove Village has seen an uptick in heroin and opioid-related drug activity. In response to this trend, Elk Grove Village first responders began carrying overdose-reversing medication, also known as Narcan, in 2013.

Through June of this year, first responders saved 11 people from overdose deaths by administering Narcan. Last year, eight lives were saved by police officers carrying Narcan, which is administered via a simple nasal spray.

“Clearly, this medication saves lives. So, as part of Elk Grove Village Cares, we need to make this medication available at the ready throughout the Village so anyone willing to step in can render aid to someone who may be suffering from an overdose, said Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson.

As part of Elk Grove Village Cares, the Village will begin placing Narcan kits in public spaces in hopes of reducing the number of overdoses. Narcan kits will be placed in nearly 20 locations, starting with Village facilities, over the next month. The program will be expanded in the coming months to potentially include placing the kits in businesses, schools, and other locations. Only two other communities in the nation have deployed Narcan in public. They are Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Gloucester, Massachusetts.

The kits are designed so that anyone can administer the drug easily and effectively. Two doses of Narcan are contained in each kit, which come equipped with easy-to-follow instructions.

“We are proud to be leaders in the efforts to stem the increase in overdose deaths,” said Elk Grove Village Deputy Police Chief Mike Gaspari, who developed the program. “When it comes to overdose deaths, our mantra is ‘Not one more.’ This program has the potential to help us save more lives and get more individuals the help they need. If putting these kits in public means we can save a life or get someone into treatment, then it has served its purpose.”



Village personnel will be trained on how to administer the drug. The Village will also provide training for private businesses that decide to display the kits in public. Administering the drug requires no special training or expertise, however, only the willingness by any good Samaritans willing to step in to help another in need.

The drug has no adverse effect on an individual that isn't suffering from an overdose, meaning that if a good Samaritan administers Narcan to someone who isn't overdosing, there will be no negative impact. And, good Samaritan laws protect individuals who are willing to help from potential liability.

“Just like defibrillators in public have saved heart attack victims' lives. Narcan in public has the same potential for those suffering from overdoses. I am proud that Elk Grove Village is taking the lead in equipping the public with the tools they need to save lives.” said Mayor Craig Johnson.