

Addictions...from Page 1A

what a problem it is and it takes that personal touch for that to happen. So, as more people become addicted, then it becomes almost impossible for someone not to have that problem. This has really been eye-opening and awakening for me. I want to thank this group (of people) for the awareness that you're trying to bring to the issue. We've got drug courts now that are trying to work on this, so we've got a lot of different groups that are realizing how big of a problem that it is."

Last week's event was the product of Medmark Treatment Centers of Blairsville's Program Director Chantelle Patterson and her Medmark co-workers' creative thinking and hard work. And after weeks of striving for the cause, her brainchild became a tangible reality that came to fruition last week.

"Today marks an event that will change the future of Union County," Patterson said. "Recovery Month is a national event that recognizes mental health substance abuse and persons with addiction. This event provides friends, families, consumers, patients, loved ones, and professionals the opportunity to unite in an anonymous public forum

and it creates awareness and education. Persons with addictions continues to grow and it's become a global epidemic, as we have seen in this community, in our homes, and in our neighborhoods."

It can be heartbreaking watching a child, sibling, parent, or friend who is trapped in an endless cycle of disease, incarceration, and even death, simply because they can't find help or deny treatment.

The fear of judgment and the stigma of being branded with the scarlet letter of an addict often prevent those addicted or dealing with mental issues from finding the necessary help that could break the cycle and restore their chance at a normal life and becoming a productive citizen in the community.

"We must encourage relatives and friends of people with mental and/or substance abuse disorders to implement preventative measures, recognize the signs of a problem, and guide those in need to appropriate treatment and recovery, and support services," Paris said.

According to the proclamation, recent studies consistently find that the treatment of mental health, alcohol, and/or drug use disorders cuts drug use by 50 percent, reduces crime by 80 percent, and reduces arrests by up to 64 percent.

"Preventing and overcoming mental and/or substance abuse disorders is essential to achieving healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally, as well as,

improving health, increasing employment, and increasing the overall social functioning of individuals who receive treatment," Paris said.

Of the local mental health and addiction treatment professionals in attendance at Meeks Park were Troy Beaver from New Hope Counseling, who talked about the vision of New Hope and how it has changed in recent years from methamphetamine treatment to counseling those that need help for a much broader spectrum of issues, not just addiction.

Al M. from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was on hand to give his testimony of how a DUI saved his life many years ago, and how he thanks law enforcement and the judicial system for introducing him to AA.

Suzanne Moore from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), which is the most recent treatment option in Union County. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

According to Moore, NAMI started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 and has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, they work in our community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need.

The staff of Medmark was in attendance for those interested in treatment for heroin, prescription pills, and opiates. They offer methadone

maintenance for those ready to get the giant monkey off their back.

There are a lot of doubts regarding methadone maintenance but the benefits of methadone far outweigh the negatives. Methadone allows the patient to end the use of needles and drug seeking behavior, reducing crime and allowing them to become employable, providing a chance at becoming a better parent, while improving their health and allowing their bodies and mind that critical opportunity to return to normal as they discover a life free of the many pitfalls of opiate addiction.

At the closing of the event, balloons were released in memory of those who lost their battle with mental illness or addiction, while others were released for those still struggling, both mentally and physically, minute-by-minute, hourly, and daily without any hope.

Until now. Patterson pointed out that no treatment is superior to another. What works for one person, might fail the next. The hope is that those in need of help will simply give treatment a chance. A motto for the event sums it perfectly. "Prevention works. Treatment is effective. People Recover."

For more information, you may contact any of the treatment centers/options mentioned above. Also, mark your calendars for September 2016 as next year's event is already in the works and it should be bigger and better in its second year.

Bower...from Page 1A

stabbing injury after arriving as backup with fellow Towns County Sheriff's Deputy Matt Prentice on the scene of a traffic stop made by Hiwassee Police Officer Tracy James involving Bower in the early morning hours that Oct. 1.

Though he was only under arrest for suspicion of DUI, Bower tried to escape by stabbing Deputy Deyton in the neck, who at first was unaware of the severity of his injury and continued to pursue Bower on foot for more than 120 yards.

Deputy Deyton deployed his Taser as Bower continued to resist, but when Deputy Prentice and Officer James approached the altercation in fast pursuit, Deputy Prentice saw Deputy Deyton drop his Taser.

Not realizing in the heat of the moment that Deputy Deyton had been injured in a near fatal stabbing, Deputy Prentice drew his own Taser and deployed it multiple times against Bower as he continued to resist.

It was only then that Deputy Prentice and Officer James discovered that Deputy Deyton was injured. Later, Deputy Deyton would report that, at the time, he believed Bower had punched him and did not realize that he had been stabbed.

Thanks to the fast work of many Towns County first responders at the scene, Deputy Deyton received the care he needed to survive his attack that morning.

Because Deputy Deyton was one of his own, Sheriff Clinton contacted the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to move forward with the investigation. Sheriff Clinton also contacted White County Sheriff Neal Walden, who agreed to jail Bower for as long as necessary.

"During the course of the investigation the following was learned," according to a TCSO press release. "Daniel Lee Bower admitted that he was able to dislocate his thumb in order to slip out of the handcuffs that had been placed on him previously by a Hiwassee Police Officer. As Deputy Deyton was speaking with Bower, Bower said he slipped out of the cuffs and pulled a knife that was hidden inside a belt that had been made to look like a regular belt buckle. Bower then stabbed Deputy Deyton in the neck and fled on foot."

Deputy Deyton received life-saving surgery and spent a month at Northeast Georgia Medical Center on his initial visit, and underwent several additional surgeries throughout the following months.

Finally able to return to work two months ago, Deputy Deyton's comeback was heralded by the awarding of two well-deserved medals of recognition: a Medal of Valor awarded by the Towns County Sheriff's Office, and a separate Medal of Valor from the Georgia Sheriffs' Association at the Sheriffs' Summer Training Conference in Jekyll Island in July of

2015.

During the course of his hospitalization and the months that followed, Deputy Deyton and his family remained constantly in the thoughts and prayers of the public that Deputy Deyton served.

Area residents made donations to an account set up by United Community Bank to help offset the cost of missed work for Deputy Deyton and his wife, Christine, who missed worked to be by her husband's side, and even the Georgia Bulldogs stepped up to help raise money for Deputy Deyton.

After reaching out to the University of Georgia's football chaplain, Kevin "Chappy" Hines, Sheriff Clinton and Deputy Deyton received a wonderful surprise. Hines, himself a deputy sheriff in Oconee County, hand delivered an autographed

football and football helmet from UGA Head Football Coach Mark Richt. The items were raffled off with the help of Towns County CLEA.

"The Towns County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Sheriffs' Association, Hiwassee Police Department, Towns County Fire Department, Towns County Emergency Medical Services, Towns County 911 Dispatch, District Attorney Jeff Langley and staff, United Community Bank, UGA Football and Coach Mark Richt, UGA Football Chaplain Kevin "Chappy" Hines, Towns County Sheriff's Citizen Law Enforcement Academy alumni, and our community for their generous donations of financial support for Deputy Aaron Deyton during this time," said the sheriff's office in its release.