

SAFE G.C. Coalition monitoring opioid crisis

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign — “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE” to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, every day, more than 115 Americans die after overdosing on opioids. The misuse of and addiction to opioids — including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total “economic burden” of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year.

NIDA maintains that the current crisis is attributed to the behaviors of pharmaceutical companies in the 1990’s who reassured the medical community that patients would not become addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers and healthcare providers began to prescribe them at greater rates. This subsequently led to widespread diversion and misuse of these medications before it became clear that these medications could indeed be highly addictive. Opioid overdose rates began to increase. In 2015, more than 33,000 Americans died as a result of an opi-

oid overdose, including prescription opioids, heroin, and illicitly manufactured fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid. That same year, an estimated 2 million people in the United States suffered from substance use disorders related to prescription opioid pain relievers, of which 591,000 use heroin.

In response to the opioid crisis, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is focusing its efforts on five priority areas: improving access to treatment and recovery services; promoting use of overdose-reversing drugs; better understanding the epidemic through public health surveillance; providing support for cutting-edge research and pushing better pain management practices.

The Coalition, composed of 12 sectors of the community — youth organizations, parents, business community, school, law enforcement, religious organizations, civic groups, healthcare professionals, state, county and local governmental agencies and others with expertise in substance abuse — will continue to monitor and educate the community about this serious crisis.

For more information about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition visit SAFE Inc. at: www.safeglencove.org.

—Laura Lane