

BUILD Update 1/31/18

NOTE WELL: Other activities at Rupp Arena and Heritage Hall pushed BUILD to change the date of the 2018 Nehemiah Action to **Thursday, May 10**. Still at Heritage Hall, doors open at 6pm.

Drug Issue Research

Our drugs campaign started in house meetings with the stories our members shared. We heard dozens of stories about loved ones who were addicted to drugs. Some are living with family or friends, some are homeless, some are in jails. Some have serious health problems because of the effects of drugs on their bodies. Others have died. We also heard stories about drug deals happening between cars, out of houses, and in neighborhood parks all around Lexington.

We began to dig into this problem through our first six research meetings. We met with Chrysalis House (a drug treatment program for women), a drug court detective (this is a diversion program in the court system for people who are addicted), probation and parole, a UK Behavioral Health faculty member specializing in opioid addiction, the Substance Abuse Violence Intervention (SAVI) at the city, the Commissioner of Public Health, and Dr. Michelle Lofwall (psychiatrist).

Some of the things we keep hearing are:

- The number of people addicted to heroin is increasing
- that there are not enough treatment facilities
- that there is limited access to those treatments
- and that the strategies the city has to decrease the chance of death from overdose and health complications – like drug court, naran distribution and needle exchange – are not operating at best capacity.

We've learned...

- In 2014 KY was 3rd in the nation for drug overdose deaths, behind WV and OH.
- There are 200 people in drug court, give or take, and an estimated 190 of them are on heroin
- Rate of deaths in Fayette County related to opioids is the highest it's ever been – was 81 in 2013, and by 2016 was 162. Overdoses have doubled.
- Fayette County is #2 in the state for overdose deaths.
- 80% heroin abuse started with prescription pain pills.
- Person has to go through treatment 7-13 times before they are successful.
- Other statistics: fire department administered 653 doses of naran in 2013; jumped to 2,376 in 2016.
- medically assisted treatment (MAT) helps drug abuse treatment be more successful
- The spread of hepatitis C from dirty needles is a public health concern

Moving forward, we will continue to meet with professionals in order to ask more questions about the problem, and eventually to learn more about best practices. We have meetings set with Svetla Slavova at the UK College of Public Health and Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, Dr. Patricia Freeman at UK Pharmacy, Van Ingram at Office of Drug Control Policy, and Terri Leather a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor with The Ridge and Paul Dalton and Associates.

On our crime campaign –

We began our crime campaign 3 years ago. Since then the problem has only gotten worse. There were 28 homicides in 2017 – this is the record for the most homicide deaths in one year for our city. The violence must stop!

In the fall, we met with the commissioners of public safety and social services 3 times to follow up and to learn more about their current programming. Police Chief Barnard retired in January and Assistant Chief Ron Compton is serving as the interim police chief. We plan to meet with the new chief once Mayor Gray appoints them. We also know that Mayor Gray won't be running for a third term as mayor. So far former Vice Mayor Linda Gorton, Council Member Kevin Stinnett, and small business owner Ike Lawrence have announced they'll be running for mayor. With these changes in leadership, we will have to continue to show our resolve and let these candidates know that 28 homicides is too many. This is unacceptable and BUILD will continue to demand real solutions for our city. We will have a full committee meeting mid-February.

On our mental health campaign –

We just got an update on our mental health campaign from Phill Gunning, the director of NAMI Lexington. Since Mental health court is continuing, they have even more data to show the effectiveness of this program. It has savings of 5 to 1 just for the jail which is great. Not many programs save the city this much money! Phill met with Commissioner Bastin and Steve Hanney, the director of the jail, this week to talk to them about partially funding Mental Health Court along with the funding from the Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention. They were receptive to the program and liked the approach but they talked about it being a tight budget year and the need to make cuts. We know that the city's public safety budget had a huge jump last year with the hiring of new police officers so it's interesting that now they might need to cut other programs. Phill is going to send us notes from the meeting along with their funding request and budget so once we have this information, we will set a committee meeting and follow up meetings with Charlie Lanter and Vice Mayor Steve Kay to get their input and support for other long term funding for Mental Health Court. We know that our support will be vital to make sure that Mental Health Court continues to be funded so it can continue to divert people with severe mental illness out of jail and into treatment.

--

All of this research and committee work will be meaningless if we don't continue to build power. We have a goal of turning out 2,000 people to the Nehemiah Action. This has been our goal in the past and we've fallen short so we really need to focus on keeping our network members engaged. Call them with these updates! Ask them to come with you to a committee meeting! Invite them to share their stories! Let's continue to rise up... AND BUILD!

And remember to come and bring at least 3 people to the 2018 Nehemiah Action on May 10.