

Community Comment 3/3/2014
By Jon Sapper
Methamphetamine and Our Community

This is Jon Sapper.

I've heard from some folks that they like the different things I talk about and the humor I include in my Community Comments. Well, there's not going to be anything funny about what I have to say today. Someone asked me to say a few things about methamphetamine in our community. I said OK.

Prior to a meeting a few weeks ago at Redwood Acres where several hundred concerned citizens from all walks of life attended, Eureka physician Dr. Michael Fratkin said, and I quote, "Now is the time to address this in our community. I can say without any doubt that the problem has exploded out-of-control resulting in enormous health costs and human tragedy. All around us, the souls of our neighbors and our neighbor's children are being destroyed permanently. All of us have learned to look away, to avert our gaze from the hollow and broken people that intimidate us and frighten our kids. The countless everyday acts of violence and the millions of dollars we spend managing this problem in our hospitals should be enough to inspire the public to take action. The faces of neglected and mistreated children and relentless crying of methamphetamine addicted infants cared for in our hospitals, then returned to their broken families, should be enough to at least consider looking for new solutions." End quote.

One thing is clear, the battle against this drug that is easy to make, relatively inexpensive and can be done anywhere is going to be won or lost at the community level. If you think it doesn't affect you, I respectfully disagree. These kinds of drugs affect not only the user, but families, neighborhoods, businesses and communities. If you open your eyes, you see it every day on our streets where addicts will rob, steal, burglarize and commit violent crimes to feed their addiction.

It is a community-wide issue and it will require a community-wide response. Concerned citizens, law enforcement, social services, health organizations, the courts, child advocacy groups, schools, service clubs, businesses, drug and alcohol

treatment advocates and churches must work together as a coalition to have any chance in fighting this epidemic.

A medical model approach to addiction treatment must be a part of the solution. In our community, we have inadequate detox services. We have inadequate emergency housing. We have inadequate short term and long term addiction treatment facilities and we have inadequate sober living alternatives. This work won't be easy, but it can be done. If you disagree, what's the alternative?

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.