

Butler Eagle

You don't beat addiction by rejecting, ostracizing addict

Our Opinion

Dec. 12, 2018

Butler County Community College launched an important effort Monday night with the hope that it would inspire local residents to say “nope” to dope.

The school hosted its first Hope Night, which is part of its “Hope is Dope” initiative to combat opioid abuse and addiction in the community.

The free event at the Butler Art Center included everything from food and music by local bands to various art-related activities, such as finger painting and watercolors.

Tracy Hack, BC3's community leadership initiatives coordinator, said that the evening's activities were aimed at helping people who are struggling with opioid addiction.

“What opioids do is cut off the endorphins, the feel-good transmitters in the brain,” she said. “The opioid addict can't feel good and becomes socially isolated. Music and art — they help build the brain's endorphins.”

It's great to see local institutions joining the fight against opioids, a scourge that has reached crisis levels in communities across the nation — including Butler County — in recent years.

In 2016, Pennsylvania reported 4,642 deaths from drug overdoses, of which nearly 85 percent involved opioids,

according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 74 of those deaths occurred in Butler County, representing a 57 percent increase from the year before.

Last year, that number rose to 5,260 deaths — of which a total of 92 took place in Butler County. Earlier this year, Gov. Tom Wolf declared the epidemic a statewide disaster.

The opioid crisis might be one for which solutions are still in short order. But it's also the type of emergency in which every little bit of assistance can go a long way.

This is why it's encouraging to see events like “Hope Night” — which is not only aimed at helping opioid users to break their cycles of addiction, but also at preventing others from ever using the drugs and getting members of the community more involved in fighting this crisis — taking place in the community.

Even more inspiring is the fact that BC3 is not making this a one-time event, but aims to hold a “Hope Night” every month. Also, the school's “Hope is Dope” classes, which are offered on Monday evenings, provide insights into alternative treatment plans to help addicts with recovery.

We commend Butler County Community College, the Butler Art Center and all of the musicians and instructors who took part in this vital event. And we hope that “Hope Night” finds success on a monthly basis.

— NCD