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Moraga recognizes Aug. 31 as International Overdose Awareness Day

By Vera Kochan



According to sources, opioid overdoses are increasing every year. In order to acknowledge the people affected by overdoses, whether victim or family members and friends, Moraga Mayor Steve Woehleke's office issued a proclamation recognizing Aug. 31 as International Overdose Awareness Day during the town council's Aug. 24 meeting.

Inspiration for the movement was initiated in 2001 by Sally J. Finn of The Salvation Army in St. Kilda, Melbourne, Australia. Since that time, community members, governments and other organizations have held events, both to raise awareness and to commemorate those lost. The common goal is to educate the public through awareness activities.

Photo courtesy Contra Costa County Meds Coalition

IOAD is the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose and remember those who have died, while also acknowledging the grief that loved ones must continue

to live with, without experiencing the stigma of guilt or shame.

Providing information to the public; encouraging discussions about overdose prevention and drug policies; as well as sending a strong message to current and former drug users that they are valued, are more of IOAD's goals toward community awareness.

Guest speaker during the council meeting proclamation was April Rovero of San Ramon, Calif. She is the founder and executive director of National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse (NCAPDA), a nonprofit, volunteer-based organization. Rovero's youngest son, Joseph, passed away in 2009 from a lethal combination of alcohol and prescription drugs (prescribed by a doctor nine days before his death). It took Rovero only six months to form NCAPDA, using her grief to spur her on with the hopes that her organization could make a difference in the lives of others.

Two years later, Rovero founded Contra Costa County Meds Coalition in order to take overdose awareness to a more localized level. According to its website, drug overdose numbers are climbing with each passing year. With regards to Contra Costa County in 2020 alone, there were 296 emergency room visits; 144 opioid-related overdose deaths; 478,723 prescriptions for opioids (excluding buprenorphine); and 93 opioid overdose hospitalizations.

CCC Meds Coalition strives to educate the community through awareness campaigns; classroom presentations; and community forums and events. They promote safe medication storage and disposal; encourage the use of medication drop boxes; and support the United States Drug Enforcement Administration's Prescription Drug Take Back Day.

CCC Meds Coalition also promotes Naloxone awareness by providing Naloxone-use training; distributing rescue kits; and increasing overall access. They are partnered with the healthcare community, education/prevention community and law enforcement.

During Aug. 31, IOAD will showcase a variety of statewide events in dozens of cities: training sessions on how to administer Naloxone/Narcan; discussions about the prevalence of Fentanyl; day of remembrance events; and symposiums featuring professionals sharing facts and information about drug-related overdoses.

For more information about National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse (NCAPDA) visit: <https://ncapda.org> or call (925) 480-7723. For more information about Contra Costa County Meds Coalition visit: cccmedscoalition.org or call (510) 949-5691.

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