

Nomination for Wells County Drug Taskforce Program

Dear Nomination Committee,

I am writing to nominate the Wells County Drug Taskforce Committee for recognition of our outstanding efforts in addressing the extensive issue of substance abuse within our community. As the Executive Director of the Wells County Chamber of Commerce, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the dedication and impact of this committee in combatting the drug epidemic that plagues our local neighborhoods.

Across the world, the prevalence of drugs is escalating, and our local communities are not immune to its devastating effects. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, US Congressman Jim Banks convened a meeting with Chamber staff, community members, business leaders, school representatives, and law enforcement to address the growing epidemic and its impact on our employers, schools, and community.

Disturbingly, our community experienced 273 overdoses, 827 positive drug screens for probation, and tragically, 2 youth-related deaths due to overdoses in 2022 alone. Despite the multitude of groups addressing substance abuse, a crucial gap existed in the collaboration and sharing of resources among them.

In response to this urgent need, the Wells County Chamber of Commerce took on the responsibility of spearheading the formation of the Wells County Drug Taskforce Committee in August 2023. This diverse coalition of nearly 40 individuals from various sectors of the community convenes monthly, with sub-committees focusing on awareness, information dissemination, and program development for employers, youth, parents, and the wider community.

One notable initiative undertaken by the committee was the successful organization of speaking engagements featuring two recovering individuals, Cody & John Speak, who shared their inspiring stories with over 1,000 youth across our local school systems and nearly 250 community members at an evening event. Although faced with the challenge of raising almost \$17,000 in just two weeks, the Chamber of Commerce obtained funding from local organizations, including the Community Foundation, to guarantee the success of these events.

Moving forward, the committee and its sub-groups are diligently working on implementing a range of initiatives, including Narcan training for different sectors of the community, ongoing prevention programs for youth starting as early as 3rd grade, support programs for parents, and community-wide events such as the Hidden in Plain Site trailer during school registrations and the upcoming Recovery Rocks concert.

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce has played a pivotal role in leading and coordinating these efforts, fostering collaboration among community partners, securing funding, and driving meaningful change through education and support initiatives.

We are proud to be a part of this new program for ongoing change in Wells County.

Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.



Erin Prible
Executive Director

