

Law enforcement facing booming drug epidemic

Dorothy Kegley

As long as illegal drugs continue to be big business and jail time for dealers continues to be a revolving door, drugs will continue to be a growing problem, according to Forest County Sheriff John Dennee.

"We put our lives on the line every day when we deal with the drug dealers and users, and we see the same faces time and time again," said Dennee.

The Forest County jail has an average daily population of 67 prisoners, and at any given day over half of them are drug related offenses, according to Dennee. And despite security measures, drugs still make it into the jail, commanding premium prices.

"It's a whole different world inside the jail," he said. "We have some people that commit small crimes just to get into the jail to sell drugs." He used the example of prescription oxycodone selling on the streets for eight dollars per pill and in the jail that same pill will go for \$120 or more.

The sheriff's department had local students fill out a questionnaire and results showed that over 60 percent of high school students had tried opioids at least once.

The drug task force has started a drug education program in the schools recently to help students understand the danger of drug use.

During a recent traffic stop between Laona and Wabeno officers found a half-filled large baggie containing a mixture of several drugs including high blood pressure pills, diabetes medication, heart medication

and a host of pain killers. These drugs came out of home medicine cabinets and were headed to a "Skittle party," were they would have been taken in random combinations along with alcohol.

Leftover hospice kits are also being used for sale or usage. Of particular interest to the dealer are pain patches, which can have a street value of \$100 to \$150.

The increase in drug use in Forest County has created a major problem for the social services department, according to Jody Jensen, Director of Social Services in Forest County.

"We currently are out of foster homes and having to take some of our local children as far as the Oshkosh area. This is not unique to just our county. Drugs are affecting all the surrounding county as well, and the kids are paying the price."

The Forest County Drug Task Force, Detective Sergeant Tom Rollinson and Detective Sergeant Tony Crum put on an in-depth program on the various drugs and how they impact our health and our community. The following is a list of some of the drugs that they touched upon during a three-hour meeting held on March 28. There are a whole host of designer drugs made with these drug combinations.

THC Marijuana

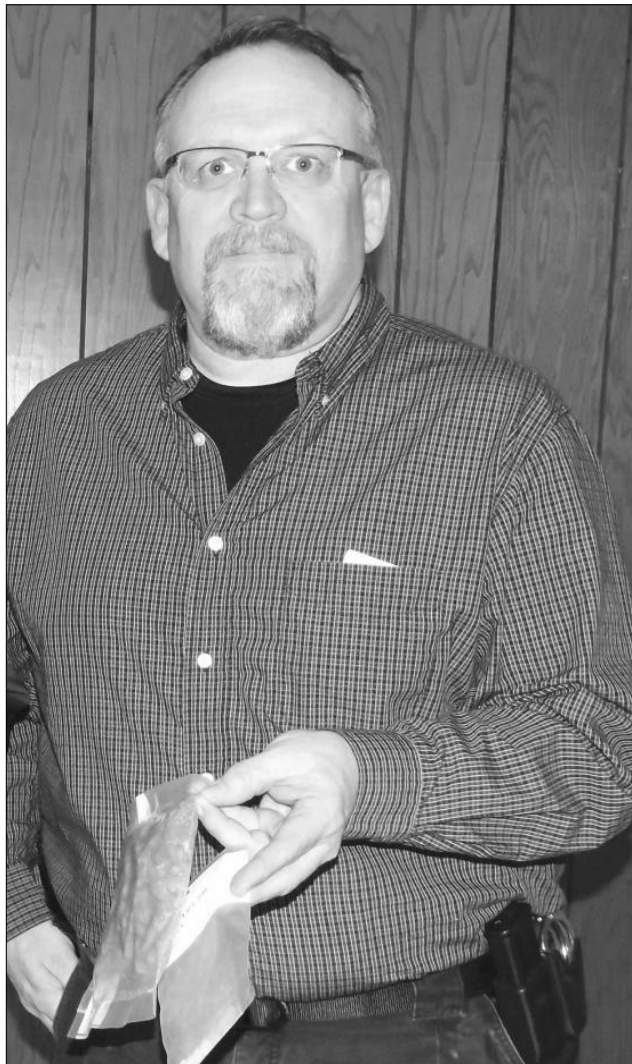
Robinson pointed out that even marijuana is not what it used to be when first introduced. It used to contain 3 to 5 percent THC and it now contains 70 to 90 percent. Drug dealers are starting to lace the THC with other more harmful drugs to create a larger group of addicts.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is an extremely addictive stimulant drug that is similar to amphetamine. It takes the form of a white

ing the user to seek repeated doses, in a binge and crash pattern.

The signs of the frequent or heavy methamphetamine include, epi-



Sheriff John Dennee explains the wide variety of drugs that law enforcement deals with daily.

odorless bitter-tasting crystalline powder. Some common street names include speed, meth, chalk, crank, ice, crystal, and glass. The drug is taken orally, smoked, snorted or dissolved in water or alcohol and injected. The drug produces an immediate, intense euphoria. However, that feeling quickly fades leav-

sodes of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, bouts of insomnia, severe dental problems (commonly called meth mouth), changes in brain structure and function, deficits in thinking and motor skills, mood disturbances, memory loss and weight loss.

Shake and Bake: The One-Pot Meth Lab

The deputies discussed a new phenomenon, nicknamed "shake and bake" meth labs, a trend they have seen growing briskly the last couple of years. These are replacing labs of the past that required hundreds of cold tablets, a large amount of fuel, household chemicals, glassware and other products and a room large enough to set up the lab.

Using the one pot method of making meth, the cooker (person making the drug) uses a plastic soda bottle, or other disposable container. The ingredients are household chemicals and cold tablets.

The quantity of meth is usually enough for one or two doses. The one-pot, shake and bake containers are highly explosive.

Deputies said that the cooker will frequently mix the ingredients in a container by the side of the road then leave it unattended for a couple of hours. When the cooker returns, if the bottle has not failed he/she will retrieve the meth and pour out the remaining chemicals in the ditch, creating an environmental and health hazard. The sheriff's department warns not to touch these bottles because if mixed with rain water or melting snow they could reactivate and cause an explosion.

Heroin

Heroin is a highly addictive opioid drug and it has long term medical and social consequences, such as, HIV/AIDS, fetal effects, crime, violence, and disruption in family, workplace, and educational environments.

Heroin has been on the rise, especially locally. The shift in the usage, in part, stems from the abuse of

prescription pain relievers, which are harder to come by than heroin, making heroin a cheaper alternative.

Deputies said that there is a misconception that pure heroin is safer than less pure forms because it does not need to be injected. Heroin addiction is progressive and if not treated, is often fatal. Some of the signs and symptoms of heroin use include; euphoria, drowsiness, impaired mental functioning, slowed down respiration, constricted pupils and nausea.


Cocaine and Crack Cocaine

Cocaine in any form is illegal and there are no FDA-approved medications for treating cocaine addiction. Cocaine is a powerfully addictive stimulant drug. The powdered hydrochloride salt form of cocaine can be snorted or dissolved in water and then injected.

Crack is the street name given to the form of cocaine that has been processed to make a rock crystal, which, when heated, produces vapors that are smoked. The term "crack" refers to the crackling sound produced by rock as it is heated. The faster cocaine is absorbed into the bloodstream and delivered to the brain the more intense the high. The downfall to this is that the more intense the high the shorter the duration, for example if it is snorted or injected the high may last only 15 to 20 minutes. To sustain a high, the drug has to be administered again, leading to addiction.

Regardless of the route or frequency of use, cocaine abusers can expe-

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