

**SAFETY:** Alcohol abuse perceived as a threat in Sisters

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to evaluate and fine-tune their efforts.

DA Hummel said that implementing the DeschutesSafe initiative “reflects our goal to address community challenges before they escalate. This type of effort shows Deschutes County’s commitment to engaging in best practices to reduce crime.”

The DeschutesSafe Community Advisory Group that is working with Hummel and his staff, as well as community experts and stakeholders, is made up of 30 individuals, representative of the population that lives and works in Deschutes County and includes, among others, law enforcement, community justice, youth, drug/alcohol/mental-health professionals, education experts, poverty professionals, the business community, neighborhood associations, and government officials.

The advisory committee began their work looking at larger issues impacting the crime rate and public safety, such as reducing illiteracy and increasing the high school graduation rate, but narrowed their focus after realizing those goals were more appropriately addressed on the state and federal level. They decided to focus on the local pool of offenders in an effort to lower the recidivism rate.

With that goal in mind,

they reviewed statistics from 2009-2015 regarding types of crimes committed and how many were committed by repeat offenders. The three most frequent crimes involve driving under the influence of intoxicants (DUII), theft, and drugs. Hummel pointed out that the theft and drug crimes are most committed by “frequent flyers,” and drugs involve the highest recidivism rate at 46 percent of offenders, which is not surprising given the nature of addiction.

A survey of the jail population indicated that the vast majority are repeat offenders – 85 percent of the men and 88 percent of the women.

Over a three-year period of 2013-2015, the highest number of arrests (1,180) was for methamphetamines, with marijuana (952, which will go down now that recreational marijuana use is legal), heroin (331), and cocaine (23 arrests). Prescription drug arrests are rapidly increasing every year.

Of the other crimes involving theft, assault, and DUII, significant numbers also involved drugs, such as 34 percent of theft crimes also involved drugs. The public surveys recently completed in the County also reflect the belief of residents that the biggest threat to public safety in Deschutes County is drugs, at 37.4 percent of all responses.

That finding also held up when analyzing the statistics by city. All cities, except Sisters, ranked drugs as the biggest threat. Sisters respondents ranked alcohol at 56 percent, with illegal drugs and child abuse both a close 51

percent, traffic safety 46 percent, and domestic violence 37 percent (respondents could mark more than one answer).

When asked if illegal drugs are impacting public safety, 64.2 percent of all respondents indicated they are a major impact in the county.

The survey also queried regarding the preferred strategy for addressing crimes related to street drugs, either prosecuting or sending to diversion or drug court. For those involved in drug dealing and distribution, 77.4 percent of respondents think offenders should be prosecuted. For people involved with possession of smaller amounts, 64.4 percent of respondents preferred diversion/drug court options.

As a result of all the data collected, successful programs in other communities, and what they are hearing in the public meetings, Hummel and the advisory committee are considering instituting “right-sized intervention” which would involve a new three-tier process for handling drug-related crimes.

At this point in time, all drug offenders are treated the same with charging, prosecution, conviction, jail/probation, and drug treatment. Other options will be studied, fitting the appropriate intervention to the individual offender, in an attempt to get people the appropriate help they need and to reduce the recidivism rate.

The design phase for the new program will take place in early 2017 with the unveiling of the program in mid-2017.

**GIVING BACK:** Patients and parents appreciated the visit

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So the plan was set to head to Portland on the day before the start of the 4A volleyball tournament in Forest Grove, and spend some time at the hospital.

Because it was flu season, the team was restricted regarding where they could go, but they did get to spend time on a floor greeting patients in their rooms or as they prepared for admission.

“We saw patients as young as three months and up to about age 10, along with a number of parents,” said Bulloch.

Freshman Samantha Silva said, “I think it’s important for athletes to do services like this because it changes your outlook on life, and it brings the team closer. It was an unbelievable experience for me and changed my life.”

For sophomore Sydney Head, the visit had career implications.

“This visit was cool for me. I have been wanting to work in the medical field, so

it was good to see what goes on at Doernbecher. I also loved seeing the faces of the children light up.”

Kendra Sitz, another sophomore, also appreciated the visit and enjoyed the reaction of the patients. In addition, she said, “Doing things like this is good for us and also spreads a good reputation for Sisters High School.”

“ I also loved seeing the faces of the children light up. – Sydney Head

Bulloch felt pleased that the girls got to serve, and believes that the tradition of giving back will continue in the future, and his sentiments were echoed by senior Emma Houck:

“It’s important for high school athletes to do service to remind them not to be selfish or take what we have for granted. Not everyone can play sports and get to represent their school, so we as athletes can take some pride in that.”

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