



## Coalition hosts drug awareness event

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By: Ezra Mann

The task to protect one's community from problems like drug abuse may seem at times like an overwhelming battle for any individual, but much of the fight can be won through awareness.

That's exactly the idea Garvin County Health Coalition members like Betsy White hope to convey as the group gets ready to host a Drug Trends Symposium on Thursday, March 28, where people will not only be able to get up to date on the latest related problems, but be able to take home how to deal with the impacts of those dangers.

Set to be held in the Pauls Valley High School auditorium, the event will feature a presentation by an expert on the subject from the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics, Dub Turner, with invitations going out to everyone from law enforcement to teachers in the community.

"I think it's important you see the effects drugs are having," said White. "It's truly an issue."

As White has found working for years with the McClain-Garvin County Youth and Family Center, drug abuse is not just a big city thing, but something that is a big problem dealt with even in small communities like Pauls Valley.

It's a concern that impacts all ages, though she sees some of the biggest dangers existing for children in the home through prescription drugs.

White hopes plenty of parents stop by the free session and can promise there are plenty of opportunities to learn something new since she has helped host this type of event before.

Aside from prescription drugs abused in situations like skittle parties where random drugs are taken after mixed together in a bowl, the focus will also discuss designer drugs like K2, a synthetic marijuana, something several Purcell football players were suspended for using last year.

"It's happening right here in our own backyard too and so we want to bring awareness to parents," said White, who remembers a similar event last fall where a young boy who had taken K2 came to the symposium to see how dangerous it could be.

"As far as the prescription drugs, the importance of getting rid of those old drugs, if you're not using them they need to be destroyed...they have no idea what they're taking."

While anyone is welcomed to bring their kids, White pointed out that some of the material will be of a rough and graphic nature, be it a slideshow or pictures of the consequences of drug abuse. It will last from 6 to 8:30 p.m. and will have refreshments provided.

"Some of the pictures and things he talks about are pretty daunting and I wouldn't want a really young child to witness that...I want parents to be responsible," said White, noting how the appropriate age to attend might be closer to early junior high age at the youngest.

“We thought it would be a good idea to get something like that here.”

For more information White can be reached at the Youth and Family Center by calling 405-527-2424, ext. 30 or 405-238-9104.