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SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT WORKS, MOYERS TELLS STATE LEADERS

Substance abuse treatment works.

That's the message William C. Moyers shared with state leaders April 24 at "The Great Awakening: An Invitation to Make a Difference" program, held at the Governor's Pavilion in Oklahoma City.

"Substance abuse treatment increases productivity, adds to the tax base, reduces prison numbers, puts money back into state budgets, restores hope and transforms lives," the vice president of external affairs for the Hazelden Foundation told substance abuse treatment advocates, including Gov. Brad Henry, Lt. Gov. Mary Fallin and leaders from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, the Oklahoma Substance Abuse Services Alliance, the Oklahoma Citizens Advocates for Recovery and Treatment Association, and the Oklahoma Drug and Alcohol Professional Counselors Association.

"Nationally, nearly 2 million people are behind bars, most of them because of drug or alcohol problems," Moyers said. "The same holds true in Oklahoma, where the majority of inmates are being incarcerated for drug- or alcohol-related offenses. Nationally, we are

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spending 96 cents of every dollar related to substance abuse shoveling up the problems associated with addiction and only 4 cents for prevention and treatment programs. In Oklahoma, every Oklahoman spends \$277 in state taxes to deal with the social problems associated with substance abuse, and only \$10 on prevention and treatment.”

Governor Henry reiterated the expense associated with substance abuse, stating that Oklahoma spends nearly \$2 billion a year in direct costs associated with addiction. He also noted how substance abuse affects our daily lives, serving as a leading causative factor for crime, domestic abuse, divorce and a host of other societal ills.

Moyers said the United States has been waging a “war on drugs” for more than 200 years and “we’re not any closer to the solution now than we were back then.”

He added, “That’s because our nation is fixated on the problem, not the solution. We are here today to focus on the solution. And the solution is treatment.”

Moyers, himself in long-term recovery from substance abuse, said he went to treatment three times before he learned to take “personal responsibility for this disease.” But today, he said, he pays taxes, votes, obeys the law and makes a positive contribution to society. “I am no longer part of the problem. I am part of the solution,” he said. “When people like me stop using and abusing drugs and alcohol, demand goes away, followed by supply. Treatment works. It may not always work the first time – just like treatment for cancer or diabetes or heart disease may not always work the first time – but by persisting, treatment does make a difference.”

Dr. Terry Cline, commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and

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Substance Abuse Services, encouraged state leaders to support treatment as an option to incarceration and to lessen the demand on other social services, including child welfare, health care and criminal justice services, systems that often end up bearing the brunt of the consequences associated with untreated substance abuse.

“Many people are in need of substance abuse treatment in Oklahoma and we can help them,” he said. “We can make a difference in people’s lives. The real message here is one of recovery and hope. Treatment does work and it can change lives.”

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services contracts with substance abuse treatment facilities throughout the state, providing residential, outpatient and halfway house services for men, women, adolescents, and women with dependent children. For more information about available services, contact the “Reachout” hotline at 1-800-522-9054.

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