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## Prevention coalition shows extensive progress



**Levy County Prevention Coalition Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis shares insight from 2017 during the first general meeting of the coalition in 2018.**

### **Story, Photos and Video**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 20, 2018 at 4:28 p.m.**

**WILLISTON --** The Levy County Prevention Coalition's first general meeting of 2018 on Friday afternoon (Feb. 16) provided an opportunity for a review of 2017, which showed great progress.

The future looks bright for the LCPC too.

Prevention Coalition Chairman Crystal Seley welcomed everyone to the event held in the Williston Elementary School Media Center.

**<https://youtu.be/qqRZU386jos>**

**In this video, Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum speak about the Feb. 14 murder of 17 people in southeast Florida. He shares some insight about how the Levy County Sheriff's Office has trained for this type of incident.**

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**Robert Wells of Meridian Behavioral Healthcare Inc. speaks at the meeting. Wells is among the founders of what has become the Levy County Prevention Coalition. It has been 16 or 17 years since this group first started. Wells and other say that Jonathan Lewis is an excellent chief operating officer who is a master of writing grant proposals to help the organization achieve its goals.**



**Gwen Love of CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services is among the founders of the Levy County Prevention Coalition.**

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**Denard Williams with Unity Family Community Center**



**Levy County Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison listens. He and Sheriff Bobby McCallum had very little sleep on the night before this meeting, because they were discussing how the county school system should conduct its business after the Feb. 14 shooting and killing of 17 people at a Broward County School.**

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**Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum reminds members of the community to call the Sheriff's Office if they see something suspicious.**



**Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco Special Agent Kevin Cox (left) shakes hands with Kristina Zachry of Quit Doc.**

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The lunch of the day was provided by Chick-fil-A. Attendees could choose from chicken nuggets or other forms of chicken, and chips and cookies were on the menu as well as drinks.

Levy County Prevention Coalition Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis led the meeting.

The coalition has been implementing its community action plan during the past year, Lewis said, reminding listeners that the plan was formed several years ago.

This coalition was active in the back to school events in Chiefland and Williston, as it provided school supplies and other items. It also promoted the “No One’s House” campaign, where any parent can sign a pledge to not allow people who are younger than 21 years old to partake of alcoholic beverages in their homes.

Also, during the past 12 months, the coalition served 12,000 people by assisting in various manners at the Tri-County Community Resource Center’s Baby Shower; the Levy County Schools Foundation’s Beast Feast; the Williston Elementary School’s Fall Festival; The Chiefland Trunk-or-Treat; The Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade in Williston; The Williston July 3 Parade; and the Trail of Treaters events in Bronson and Williston.

During this past year’s Crab Fest, the Levy County Prevention Coalition provided 124 law enforcement response officials with meals, water and a safe meeting place.

There were 25 sites such as convenience stores, where the Levy County Prevention Coalition staff observed placement of signs for alcohol and tobacco sales.

In 2017, there were five Friday Night Done Right events by the Levy County Prevention Coalition, where there were 656 young people served.

These events were the Drag Steer Roping at the Cowboy Church; Basketball Skills Training at Williston Middle High School; Kickball Tournament in Chiefland; Fifth Quarter After Football Game Hangout; and the Pahokee Playoff Game.

Lewis said this year the coalition is working with the athletic directors in the schools to encourage youth to attend all sporting events.

In cooperation with the Lutheran Services Foundation Health Systems and others in 2017, there were Lunch and Learn events that included Understanding Addiction; Substance Abuse Mental Health; and Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Through the acquisition of a Florida Department of Juvenile Justice grant, the coalition launched a mentoring program. In this, on Friday nights, mentees met with a high school football player once a week during football season. At the final home game of the season, they ran onto the field with the mentor to be recognized.

As part of the mentoring program., there was also an afterschool cake party and a Christmas Fun Day.

Partnering with the City of Williston, the coalition conducted a free summer camp

In 2017, the coalition also had 312 students participate in the Know The Law program; reached in excess of 12,000 people with the No One’s House program; and collected 175 pounds of prescriptions as part of the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, Levy County Sheriff’s Office, Williston Police Department and Chiefland Police Department project in 2017.

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As for the Know The Law program in 2018, Lewis sees a potential to double the number of students from 2017.

The coalition partners with the Levy County Sheriff's Office to offer this program. The coalition plans in 2018 to offer it to every fifth grader in Williston, every sixth grader in Bronson, Cedar Key Chiefland and Yankeetown and every third grader in

In 2017, the coalition conducted Responsible Vendor Training in Bronson, Cedar Key, Chiefland and Williston, to help clerks, bartenders and others learn more about alcohol and tobacco sales. Vendors received a certificate of completion, which in some cases reduced liability insurance premiums.

Question, Persuade and Refer are the QPR of the recent program the coalition sponsored for Levy County School District counselors, Lewis said.

This QPR program is to help children who feel suicidal. The "refer" part of the program, he conceded, is lacking in rural Florida.

Mental health providers often want the person to go to them, Lewis said. This year, the coalition is going to try to work with the providers to have bring services to the youth – perhaps even to the child's house.

During the last half of the meeting, representatives of partners spoke.

Kristina Zachry, the community health advocate who is with the Tobacco Free Partnership of Levy County, gave an update about the progress of that group. She mentioned that the Levy County Fair is going to be tobacco free for the first time ever, when it happens in the spring.

Gwen Love of CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services said that with its Too Good for Drugs and Too Good for Violence programs, it is serving roughly 2,000 students in Williston Elementary School, Bronson Elementary School and Chiefland Elementary School.

She said this is a model program.

Denard Williams, a data entry specialist with Unity Family Community Center, spoke about the Students Winning and Achieving Goals program. In SWAG, he said, students in the after-school program are kept safe between the hours of 3 and 5 to 6 p.m. on schooldays.

This is seen as a time when some students may be inclined to perform some risky behavior, he said.

Another program provided by Unity Family Community Center helps schools provide students with information about the benefits of abstinence from sex before marriage.

Levy County Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison spoke about the school system's efforts to improve mental health training for school counselors.

Extracurricular activities are the "heart and soul" of a school, Edison said. Sports, band, Hi-Q and other activities help students become more goal-oriented in a positive manner.

Edison said he anticipates broaching this aspect of schools from a system-wide methodology and to determine expectations for building better community pride and school pride.

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Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum said Levy County deputies are being trained in the use of Narcan for the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdose, as manifested by respiratory and/or central nervous system depression.

Beyond the methods of dealing with the opioid crisis in the nation, McCallum addressed the recent mass killing at a school in Broward County.

He said mental illness in schools is a problem. Drug abuse, including the addiction to opiates, is a driving factor that fuels into the engine of crime in the county, state and nation.

The sheriff said society is seeing today the sadness that comes from children being born to drug-addicted parents.

Sheriff McCallum, Superintendent Edison and Undersheriff Brett Beauchamp were on the phone for three hours the night before this coalition meeting, and that went into the early hours of the morning.

The LCSO and the school leaders are doing everything possible for student safety, McCallum said. This process did not just start on Feb. 14. There have been progressive plans and strategies in place for years now.

There is a Tactical Response Unit that trains in each school during the off-hours of the various facilities, he said. Every Levy County deputy has maps and layouts of all of the campuses available in their onboard computers in their cruisers, McCallum said.

The sheriff asks everyone to contact the LCSO if they see suspicious activity.

“If you see something,” he said, “say something.”

Even what might prove to be idle threats made on social media deserve attention, he said.

The Levy County Coalition leaders and staff include Chairman Crystal Seley, Co-Chairman Chris Cowart, Secretary Brett Beauchamp, Treasurer Robert Wells, Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis, Parliamentarian Edith Brown, Community Projects Coordinator Rose Wilder, Youth Development Coordinator Cheryl Davis, Student Intern (a sophomore at the University of Florida) Lauren Bautista, and honorary board members Sheriff Bobby McCallum, Williston Police Chief Dennis Strow, Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison and Annie Battles.

The next meeting of the Levy County Prevention Coalition is scheduled for April 19 at noon.