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## Residents: Let's fight Pinckney-area heroin use

By Christopher Behnan • DAILY PRESS & ARGUS  
• May 20, 2010

A packed room fell silent when Cody Buck said he not only bought heroin in Pinckney, but inside the walls of Pinckney Community High School.

Buck, a 2008 Pinckney Community High School graduate, addressed Wednesday's Pinckney Community Town Hall Meeting, organized in reaction to an explosion in youth heroin use and overdoses in the Pinckney area.

More than 100 people filled Shalom Lutheran Church's sanctuary in Putnam Township to express frustration, ask questions and suggest solutions to what experts said is a heroin "epidemic" in the area.

Experts called the local heroin trend a problem that demands a "community-owned solution."

Buck, who served a jail sentence on drug-related charges, said he acquired some of his heroin the Pinckney area, including at the high school. He overdosed on heroin at one point, requiring five shots directly to his heart to revive him.

Since his release from jail, Buck left the community for Northville, where he lives with his grandmother.

"I had to get away from the town," Buck said of Pinckney, widely considered a safe, bedroom community.

"It just completely ruined everything — family, my friends, school. The list goes on and on," he added, addressing the audience.

Buck was joined upfront by Hilary Brewer, 19, also a recovering heroin addict and Pinckney Community High School graduate.

Brewer said she and Buck were examples of the heroin crisis in the Pinckney area.

Pinckney rivals only Livonia and Marquette in Michigan in heroin use in the 16-24 age group, said Shannon Rozell of Brighton Hospital in

Brighton Township.

There have been at least 10 deaths from heroin overdoses in the Pinckney area since 2007, according to data from the Pinckney Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, which organized the meeting.

Pinckney Community Schools Superintendent Dan Danosky noted that May evenings are normally reserved for celebrating student achievements, rather than addressing pressing crises in the community.

"We need you," said Danosky, clearly flustered by recent drug-related student tragedies.

"One's too many, and we've had more than one, as you've seen tonight," he added.

Pinckney Community High School students Michelle Moenart and Alex Decker discussed efforts at the school, including a student-run anti-drug program that began just one week ago.

Starting today, students at the high school can sign a "unifying statement" against drugs.

The high school's positives, including champion wrestling and cross country teams, an award-winning student business group and a student who achieved a perfect ACT score by far outweigh its negatives, said Decker, also editor of The

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Connection student newspaper that appears in the Daily Press & Argus.

He said a recent polling of 135 students indicated that 58 percent had smoked marijuana; 21 percent smoked marijuana regularly; and 94 percent said they could easily access prescription medications.

Following the formal presentation, an impassioned, energized crowd urged immediate intervention in the community before school lets out for summer in about two weeks.

Experts maintain that heroin addiction often stems from unauthorized prescription-drug use. For that reason, prescription medications have become the latest "gateway drug" to illegal drugs, including heroin.

They said youth who pilfer prescription medications continue to look for a greater high after their access to the medications runs out.

Wednesday's program was pulled together in about one week in reaction to a string of heroin overdoses by youth in the community, including a recent fatal heroin overdose of a Pinckney Community High School graduate.

Area youth with any drug-related information to call (800) SPEAKUP, or visit [www.1800speakup.org](http://www.1800speakup.org). Information can be reported by phone and online anonymously.

A drug tip line, (810) 227-7897, is also available for anonymous reporting.

Brighton Hospital offers free youth and family programs to discuss drug addiction and offer support.

The coalition will next meet May 27 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Putnam Township.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Christopher Behnan at (517) 548-7108 or at [cbehnan@gannett.com](mailto:cbehnan@gannett.com).

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