

Red Ribbon Week will be observed October 23-31 this year! The National Family Partnership organized the first Red Ribbon campaign to provide drug awareness and to encourage parents to talk to their children about the dangers of misusing drugs. According to the Red Ribbon Campaign website, children of parents who talk to their teens regularly about drugs are 42% less likely to use drugs than those who don't, yet only a quarter of teens report having these conversations! Make it your goal during this week to talk to your children about this unfortunate issue.

Hocking County may seem quiet and innocent enough however; there is no denying that this is a high drug trafficking area. In fact, Hocking County is ranked ninth in the state for unintentional deaths by drug overdose. Between 2007 and 2011 the average rate of accidental deaths by drug overdose in Hocking County was 22.1 per 100,000. This is shocking when compared to the average rate of Ohio at 13.1 per 100,000.

According to the Ohio Department of Health, drug overdose deaths continue to be a public health crisis in Ohio with a 440 percent increase in the number of deaths from 1999 to 2011. In 2011 unintentional drug overdoses caused 1,765 deaths in Ohio. This is the HIGHEST number of deaths on record for drug overdose in Ohio! Unintentional drug overdose continues to be the leading cause of injury-related death in Ohio, ahead of motor vehicle crashes, suicide and falls. Prescription drugs are involved in most of the unintentional drug overdoses and have largely driven the rise in deaths. Pain medications and multiple drug use are the largest contributors to the epidemic.

Data shows that heroin use is on the rise and is increasingly responsible for overdose deaths. Heroin involved deaths have increased from 16% in 2008 to 24% of all drug overdoses in 2011. Prescription opioids (pain medications) remain associated with more fatal overdoses than any other prescription or illegal drug including cocaine, heroin and hallucinogens combined. Cases involving multiple drug use are also contributing significantly to this epidemic. In 2011, 71% of overdose deaths involved more than one drug.

What can you do if you suspect drug activity in your neighborhood? Call the Hocking County Sheriff tip line at 740-653-5224 ext. 111. There are also signs available through the Hocking County Sheriff's office to display in your yard in promotion of the tip line.