



**PRESIDENTIAL CITIZEN
SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

Opioid Crisis

Presidential Citizen Scholars
Capstone Project

Amanda Thompson
(Senior; Presidential Citizen Scholar)



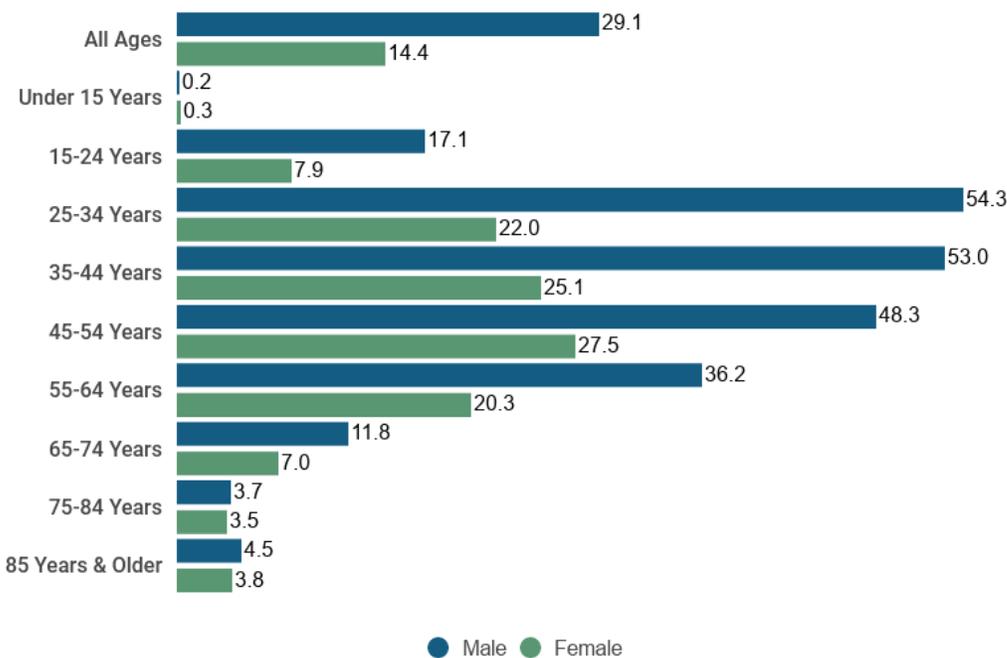
Introduction

The opioid crisis has plagued American communities since the mid-90s and has caused over 500,000 American deaths since. In 2017, former President Trump declared the opioid crisis an official public health emergency. The opioid crisis has impacted our community of Salisbury largely leaving many without their loved ones and nowhere to turn for resources or aid. With more research into this epidemic, some solutions have been identified. The main issue is accessibility to these solutions and resources for those who are struggling or have a loved one who is. This is what I hope to achieve through my Capstone Project.

Background Research

According to new research, the number of opioid deaths in Maryland have increased by 5.7% in the months since COVID-19 hit its first peak in 2020 (Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center, 2021). There were 612 opioid-related fatal overdoses in this time frame, an increase of 6.3 percent from the first three months of 2020. Opioids were involved in 89.7 percent of all fatal overdoses. 564 deaths involved fentanyl, an increase of 5.2 percent. Fentanyl was involved in 92.2 percent of all opioid-related deaths. There were 136 prescription opioid-related deaths, an increase of 37.4 percent (Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center, 2021).

Drug Overdose Deaths Among Age Groups per 100,000 Residents



The data collected in this report only grows more concerning. It continues, “Prescription opioid-related fatal overdoses rose by 37.4 percent from January to March of 2021, increasing from 99 in the first quarter of 2020 to 136 in the same time frame in 2021. This follows a substantial annual increase of 22.8 percent observed in 2020. This trend is particularly concerning given that prescription opioid-related deaths had previously decreased annually every year since 2016. If this trend were to persist throughout the year, it would represent a historic milestone, with prescription opioid-related deaths now outpacing heroin-related deaths for the first time since 2011 (Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center, 2021, p. 5).”



Figure 1 This is a caption. This is a caption. This is a caption.

Project Overview

The purpose of my project is to spread awareness, reduce stigma, and connect those struggling with opioid abuse or those who love someone who is struggling with opioid abuse to various resources within the community that could save lives. In order to accomplish all of the formentioned tasks, I decided the best way to do this was to host an event in the Salisbury community where people could gather to collect information, available resources, and potentially Narcan and Narcan training. This cause is very close to my heart as I have close family members who have struggled with opioid addiction for their entire lives, and I have seen first-hand the impact that this horrible epidemic can have on lives.

My goal is to minimize the impact for other people so they will not have to struggle the way that my family and I have due to this crisis. Through several months of Research and connecting with local community members, I had decided that the best way to take action is to connect local members of the community with various resources and get the message out there about a “miracle drug” called Naloxone or “Narcan.” this drug can be administered through aspirates into the nasal passages and can reverse an overdose and awake and someone who is unconscious due to it. This saves the life of a person who is undergoing an overdose until they can be given the proper medical

attention. I first found out about the drug in my time with the Opioid Impacted Family Support Program as a Community Health Worker. This program planted a seed in my mind about a significant solution to a problem that many are facing within our community. After learning about naloxone, I decided to take the next step and reach out to the local health department of Wicomico County and the head of the fire department to learn more about the effects of the opioid epidemic in Salisbury, MD. from the fire department I learned that a large number of opioid overdoses in this area take place in local gas station parking lots, homes in local neighborhoods, and on or around college campuses. From the Wicomico County Health Department, I was able to get in touch with a committee member of the local organization, Wicomico Goes Purple. From there, we had an incredible conversation about the ways that I hope to better the community. She offered me a seat on the steering committee for Wicomico Goes Purple and since then I have been attending every meeting and taking part where I can to learn more about the efforts of this organization in combating the opioid crisis in our community. I feel I've learned a lot from their organization and that resource has been instrumental in the progress of my project. This process has been immensely fulfilling but has not come without its challenges. One of the largest barriers that I have been faced with in my journey towards advocacy and awareness is stigma. Many people have a preconceived notion of substance abuse and the people who are affected. This prevents honest conversation and ultimately, the providing of valuable resources and aid. The mission of my project is to help tear down this barrier one

conversation at a time. all of these factors lead to the main idea of my project which is the event. The event will be hosted the second week in April during Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week at the local Newton Street Community Center. At this event, I will be partnering with Wicomico Goes Purple to bring together community members in a safe space where people can receive resources, training, and support from others who understand their plight. The event will go as follows: first, there will be Narcan training provided to those who attend, and in conversations with community members who are involved in “Leave Behind Naloxone” we should be able to acquire a large number of doses to give out to those who attend the event following the training. Second, there will be live speakers to come and share their stories and all of them have received assistance

and are now in the business of giving assistance to others who share their struggle. Third, I hope to partner with Food for Flock to provide local community members with canned goods and food if they're struggling financially during this time. There will be trained professionals at this event who can connect those in crisis or who know someone in crisis to the appropriate resources available to them in their area.

Project Preparation

To prepare for this project, I fostered connections with passionate and focused leaders within the community. I knew I wanted my project to magnify the voices of those who have been touched by opioid addiction. To do that, I had to find a way to include personal testimonies in the event. It was then that I decided I wanted to involve a speaker in the *Shatter the Stigma* event.

I was connected to Tedra Cobb, an advocate partnered with “*Campaign to Reduce Stigma: A Community Conversation on Opioid Use Disorder.*” She is a certified Narcan trainer and a brilliant activist who utilized her knowledge to amplify the voices of those affected by Opioid Misuse Disorder. Tedra agreed to attend my event as a speaker to train on stigma reduction and advocate for change.

Photo from Shatter the Stigma event of Tedra Cobb (left) and event organizer Amanda Thompson (right)



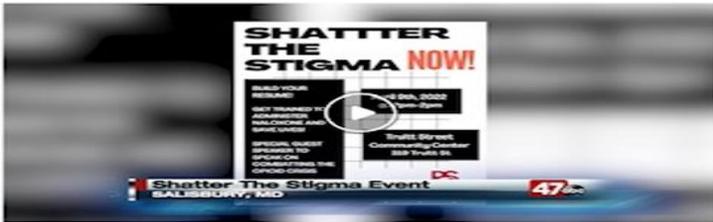
The Wicomico Goes Purple Committee took a special interest in my project when I first brought it to them last year. They assisted me in the preparation and graciously provided Naloxone and a trainer to participate in the event. The Naloxone Trainer who agreed to join me at the event is Jessica Taylor, CAC-AD of the Wicomico County Health Department. She agreed to provide Naloxone kits, resource materials, bracelets, pins, and other items to assist in the life-saving act of administering Naloxone.



Photo of Naloxone Training Table from Shatter the Stigma event

'Shatter The Stigma Now' event provides tools/resources to tackle opioid overdoses

April 6, 2022 by Javari Burnett



SALISBURY, Md. – Students at Salisbury University are trying to tackle the current opioid crisis and they're doing so by hosting a free training event.

The university's Presidential Citizen's Scholars program is partnering with the Wicomico County Health Department to host the *Shatter the Stigma Now* event. Community members will learn how to administer naloxone, which goes through ones nasal passages and is used to reverse an opioid overdose.

Student organizer Amanda Thompson tells 47 ABC that their research shows an increase in opi-

To promote the event, 47abc's Javari Burnett agreed to interview me for a segment on substance abuse promoting the event and reach a wider audience. With the help of my 2022 PCS Cohort, I also handed out flyers across the city of Salisbury.

A great way to achieve sustainability is through my collaboration with Naloxone Leave Behind. There are groups that participate in Naloxone Leave Behind in several different states including Maryland and Delaware. The mission of this organization is to leave naloxone, the life-saving drug, in highly frequented areas of opioid abuse to potentially lower the number of opioid-related overdoses. With this vision in mind, I made the choice to become a Naloxone trainer to teach future advocates to save lives. I was connected to a wonderful trainer with the Maryland Peer Advisory Council named Tee Scott. She has agreed to support me in continuing to host events and supply “Train the Trainer” access so that more of the community can be educated and provide Naloxone to those in need.

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Personal Communications

Brian Perez- Recovery Centers of America

Tedra Cobb- Campaign to Reduce Stigma

Jessica Taylor- Wicomico County Health Department

**Christina Bowie-Simpson- Wicomico County Health Department,
Wicomico Goes Purple**

Rachel Manning- Newton Street Community Center Staff

Captain Truitt- Fire Department

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The Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (PACE) is a resource center where the SU community, local government, non-profit and public groups can access knowledge and information. PACE draws on the interdisciplinary expertise of SU faculty, students, staff, and community partners. As a nonpartisan contributor, the Institute organizes projects and programs that are customized to fit the needs of the Eastern Shore community. For more information about PACE or the PCS Program, please contact us at PACE@salisbury.edu

The Presidential Citizen Scholars Program (PCS) is a multi-faceted, civic engagement experience that prepares students to become community leaders now and in the future. The PCS program offers students of all majors and levels of experience the opportunity to become engaged in the political life of the community and to develop habits of democratic citizenship. The PCS program builds on SU's mission statement "to empower students with knowledge, skills, and core values that contribute to lifelong learning and active citizenship in a democratic society." Over the course of three semesters, Presidential Citizen Scholars apply the theory and practice of engaged citizenship to cultivate a legacy project that will endure beyond their time as a student at Salisbury University.



Amanda Thompson lives in Salisbury, MD and is a senior pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Social Work.

