



LUCAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF JOHN THARP



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D. A. R. T. DRUG ABUSE RESPONSE TEAM

BECOMING PART OF THE SOLUTION

On February 12, 2015 The Toledo Blade editorial page called on the community to support D.A.R.T., noting that the unit was "changing how law enforcement responds to Ohio's top public health problem." Despite widespread acclaim and success, D.A.R.T. lacks the resources to meet the growing demands of the epidemic. D.A.R.T. officers have excessive caseloads, and frequently cannot locate overdose victims because the officers were unable to meet the addicts immediately after such an occurrence. Overdoses are when the addict is easiest to locate and amenable for treatment at local hospital emergency rooms. These missed opportunities can prove to be fatal, and detrimental to families in the Lucas County community.

D.A.R.T. now operates with a lieutenant, six deputy sheriffs, Metropark Officers, one Toledo Police Department Vice Detective, one Mercy Public Safety Department Officer, a part-time lieutenant from the University of Toledo, three part-time patrolmen from the Oregon Police Department, two part-time Lucas County Public Library Officers, two part-time Waterville Township patrolmen, college/high school interns, community volunteers, and support from the Chief and Assistant Chief of the Springfield Township Fire Departments. The D.A.R.T. Officers have a case load that surpasses 1,900 clients and continues to grow daily. D.A.R.T. needs an additional ten officers and five counselors to give each case the attention it needs and deserves. Working together, we can combat the epidemic of heroin and opiate addiction that impacts Northwest Ohio Communities.

Your support of the D.A.R.T. unit will increase the team's resources to save more lives and families. The officer's intervention with addicts will reduce criminal activity associated with opiate addiction, create a reduction of incarceration costs, and will directly address members of our community struggling with the disease of opioid addiction. This illness impacts every ethnicity, educational level, and socioeconomic class in Lucas County, the State of Ohio, and the United States.



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Problem:

In Northwest Ohio, needless deaths due to heroin and synthetic opioid overdoses have reached epidemic levels.

Response:

In June of 2014, Lucas County Sheriff John Tharp created the Drug Abuse Response Team (D.A.R.T.), within the Lucas County Sheriff's Office as part of a county-wide collaborative initiative with the assistance of Attorney General Mike DeWine and his staff.

D.A.R.T. Mission:

Our mission is to raise the awareness of the dangers associated with opiates, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl within our community.

D.A.R.T. Objectives:

1. Providing alcohol and drug education formats to everyone of any age in our community.
2. Providing alcohol and drug intervention by linking addicts and families with supportive services for two years. Including formal and informal follow-ups by officers to ensure sobriety and safety.
3. Utilizing alcohol and drug investigative recovery and treatment services by collaborating with various court jurisdictions. This will assist in combating retail theft, family victimization, multiple overdoses, and illegal drug activity while promoting recovery.
4. Providing alcohol and drug supportive services which includes weekly family educational groups, peer to peer linkage, and therapeutic recovery group sessions.
5. Increase human trafficking victim identification and public awareness through coordinated public outreach and awareness platforms that include education and research which includes working with federal agencies.

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Responding to the opiate public health and safety crisis, Lucas County Sherriff John Tharp launched an addiction response unit in July 2014. Since that time the Drug Abuse Response Team (D.A.R.T.) continues the collaborative works with a variety of law enforcement agencies, first responders, the Lucas County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, various treatment agencies, volunteers, religious organizations, private business groups, and governmental entities.

Working beyond their role as first responders, the D.A.R.T. officers and counselors intervene in situations involving opiate overdoses and/or other drug abuse issues with victims and their families. The D.A.R.T. Unit provides linkage to detoxification, treatment, and recovery housing to victims of overdoses in the community. This also includes working with inmates in the Lucas County Correctional Center with an opiate addiction. D.A.R.T. Officers also provide and connect addicts and families with supportive services.

- First contact with a victim and/or their families, the D.A.R.T. Unit provides them with the Lucas County Recovery Tool Kit; which is filled with information on recovery and mental health resources.
- Within or under 24 hours of coming into contact with D.A.R.T., the victim can visit with a mental health and recovery counselor who assesses and provides opportunities for treatment. The members of D.A.R.T. can personally accompany and support the victim and their family throughout the recovery process.
- D.A.R.T. officers and counseling staff continue to follow-up formally and informally with the victim and their family for up to two years. Referrals are made for counseling services, life coaching, and support groups such as NarAnon or the co-facilitated D.A.R.T. family support group S.A.F.E. (Supporting Addicts Families Everywhere).
- Due to the mentor like relationships with the officers and counselors of D.A.R.T. opiate victims have volunteered information, which has resulted in many high profile indictments of opioid dealers in the area.
- Sheriff John Tharp hosts the quarterly Lucas County Coalition where members of the D.A.R.T. unit as well as vested community members work to combat this epidemic.
- Working in conjunction with the treatment provider "A Renewed Mind", inmates from the Lucas County Correctional Center are assessed and/or linked for the administration of Naltrexone (Vivitrol) prior to their release date.
- Inmates identified with an opiate addiction are offered linkage to D.A.R.T. with the possibility of family members becoming trained and provided with the lifesaving drug Naloxone (Narcan).
- D.A.R.T. consistently brings awareness to the opioid health epidemic by participating in events like block watch meetings, community forums, fairs, festivals, religious panel discussions, school events, and educational presentations with area hospitals. Social media and publications continue to play a huge role in spreading awareness.
- In 2015 D.A.R.T. encountered an estimated 1800 victims with twice that number of family members. In 2015, the unit removed three females from a life of prostitution by placing them into a "safe house" and linking them to counseling and supportive services.
- D.A.R.T. works with the community by listening, educating, and supporting our citizens as we serve as a bridge to treatment.
- From January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016 D.A.R.T. responded to and opened 973 new cases.

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Steven's Story

An average of three people a week in the Toledo area die of heroin-related overdoses, largely because of a lack of treatment. Without the D.A.R.T. unit run by the Lucas County Sheriff's Office, Steven Fisher, 25, of Toledo, could have been one of them.

Steven's story is typical of the estimated 10,000 people in this region who are addicted to heroin and other opioids. After using prescription painkillers – mainly Percocet and Oxycontin – he graduated to heroin when he was 20. Eventually, Steven was shooting up to a gram a day and spending \$50 to \$100 a day to support his habit. If he stopped using, he felt the agony of withdrawal, including wrenching body aches, nausea, diarrhea, and feverish sweats.

To get money to buy drugs, Steven sold drugs and worked at local restaurants. But it wasn't enough. Soon, he was "boosting," breaking into buildings and selling the stolen property. In 2012, he spent a year in prison for burglary, after breaking into a neighbor's house and stealing three televisions.

"Addiction makes you do things you don't want to do," he said. "I'm not a bad person, but I've made some bad choices."

In early January, Steven decided to get treatment, but the waiting list for detox at a local treatment center was eight weeks. So Steven went out and used again. On January 14th, he overdosed, locked in his bathroom with a needle in his arm. Steven's brother called 911 and Steven was taken to the University of Toledo Medical Center.

After Steven was discharged, he received a call from a D.A.R.T. officer, Deputy Charles Johnson, who noticed Steven's case while going through daily reports from the Toledo Police Department. Deputy Johnson called Steven's house. The day after the two talked, he visited Steven at home.

The next day, D.A.R.T. officers took Steven to the Zepf Center in Toledo to get assessed and start detox. Again, Steven was told there were no available beds. "If I can't get in," Steven said, "I'm going to go out and use again."

Another D.A.R.T. officer, Deputy Shawn McMahon, told the receptionist he wasn't leaving until Steven got in. A few hours later, Steven was admitted to detox. Eight days later, he entered recovery housing.

During his first two months in treatment, Steven saw five members of his group leave, relapse, and die. With the help of D.A.R.T. officers and Zepf counselors, however, Steven stayed with it. Today, he's clean, excited about his new life, and eager to get back to work. A 2009 graduate of Maumee High School, Steven plans to enroll in Owens Community College and become a chemical dependency counselor.

"My life is a million times better," he said. "And it's only going to get better."

D.A.R.T. continues to divert nonviolent addicts from jail and prison by getting them into treatment and opening the door to a new life. Still, with a backlog of nearly 200 cases – and new cases coming in ever day – D.A.R.T. officers can't keep up with this growing and lethal epidemic of addiction. Your support of D.A.R.T. will help caring and committed law enforcement officers save lives and make this a safer and better community.



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