

Our Views: Drug Court Is Making a Difference for All of Us

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Our Views: Drug Court Is Making a Difference for All of Us By The Chronicle | 0 comments

The contrast could not have been more clear.

The page 3 headline on Tuesday read: “Lewis County Drug Court Celebrates 100th Graduate.” The story goes on to talk about how a former heroin addict is rebuilding his life thanks to the supportive and rigorous structure provided by drug court.

Flip forward to the front page, where the secondary headline on the lead story is a grim inversion: “Chehalis Arms Himself, Warns Man to Stop, Shoots, Then Tussles With Alleged Intruder High on Meth.”

Our county and our nation are gravely threatened by the scourge of dangerous, mind-altering drugs. These chemical stews blow out the pleasure center of the brain, leaving an emptiness, a craving, a frantic desperation that destroys lives. People who will do anything to get their next fix often become criminals, or their brains become so dysfunctional that they become dangerous as they simply go about their lives with impaired abilities.

The incident in Chehalis, which could easily have ended with one or more people dead, involved a man who was allegedly high on meth entering a home illegally and attacking an armed homeowner.

It's fair to say that this crime probably would not have happened if a highly addictive and mind-altering drug was not involved.

And so we turn the page, literally, to the story of a 25-year-old man who, just two years ago, overdosed on heroin and was arrested. He fled the law and, he says, hit rock bottom.

He was ready to do his time in jail. Thankfully, we, the people of Lewis County, have a better solution available for our friends, neighbors and relatives who still have the potential and desire to salvage their lives and begin rebuilding.

Our drug court provides intensive treatment, frequent check-ins with judges, and regular but random drug testing.

It's the epitome of tough love, providing support and encouragement along with a no-nonsense lack of tolerance for backsliding.

People who know they failed can begin to take pride in overcoming addiction.

"My counselor told me today he was proud of me for being remorseful for poisoning my community with drugs," Brandon Hackney wrote on Facebook as he began the drug court process.

Hackney succeeded, recently becoming the 100th graduate of drug court.

Instead of becoming a drain on society, a one-time criminal and addict is now a functioning, productive member of society, "regaining values and morals that were traded off for the immediate gratification of drugs," said Eugenia Center counselor Niston Franco, the man referred to in Hackney's Facebook post.

Overcoming the plague of drugs is a huge but crucial task for our community. Drug court is a key weapon in that battle.