



ULSTER COUNTY

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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UCAN RECOMMENDS ACTION IN THE BATTLE AGAINST HEROIN AND OPIOID USE, ABUSE & OVERDOSE

(Kingston, NY) Public disapproval of needle exchanges, unregulated “sober” housing, and delays in obtaining necessary care are just some of the barriers identified by the Ulster Coalition Against Narcotics (UCAN) which can, and has, lead to lives lost and families devastated.

As part of their final report to the Legislature, UCAN Chairman Louis Klein and Coalition Members presented seven policy recommendations and five budget recommendations that, if implemented, would move Ulster County toward action to address a Heroin epidemic that is leaving, in its wake, death and destruction in the lives of Ulster County families.

“First as families in Ulster County and then representing law enforcement, treatment providers, the medical community, the justice system, health and human service agencies and elected officials, we banded together to say enough,” stated Coalition Chairman Klein. “This partnership is recommending a battle strategy that will, in our opinion, change the focus from waiting for the next funeral to action in the battle against narcotic use, abuse, and overdose.”

In its first action following the presentation of the report, the Ulster County Legislature recognized that raising awareness, breaking stigmas, and calling attention to this public health crisis is the cornerstone to combating this public health crisis and in doing so, proclaimed September 2015 as Lost To Addiction Awareness Month In Ulster County. They voted unanimously at their September 15, 2015 session to honor the lives lost to addiction and to pay tribute to the families that were left behind, as well as to those families openly or privately continuing, to fight against this devastating disease.

Legislative Chairman John Parete stated, “The devastating effects of this disease can no longer be ignored. I thank UCAN Chairman Lou Klein for his leadership and truly appreciate the hard work and dedication of the coalition members.”

“My son was swept up in a crisis that continues to face our nation, stealing another life approximately every fourteen minutes,” stated Coalition Member Elizabeth Berardi. “Carter tried so very hard to claim his life back from this disease. He found calmness while seeing what others didn’t understand. He was forgiving of the stigma, the silence and lack of emotional and medical support. Inside his gentle soul was a courageous man, who suffered from a horrific illness. My son Carter Berardi is and will forever be my hero.”

The Coalition’s Report to the Legislature can be found at the Legislature’s website (<http://ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/forms-reports>).