

Our City

You don't think much about it until it kicks you in the face. Even then it is hard to believe it happened to someone you know and care about. Oh, there is plenty of lip-service about it. It is by no means a secret. Law enforcement will tell you it is a crisis that they continue to battle futilely. As a matter of fact I was talking with my neighbor, Police Chief Brandon Wilkinson, as he was out doing yard work when I got a phone call from Sally and was kicked in the face.

According to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration the nation is in the midst of an unprecedented opioid epidemic. In 2017 more than 130 people a day died from opioid-related drug overdoses every day. In that same year 47,600 people died from overdosing on opioids, 28,466 deaths were attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone and 15,482 deaths were attributed to overdosing on heroin. An estimated 40% of opioid overdose deaths involved a prescription opioid. Feeding the crisis and more alarming still 11.4 million people misused prescription opioids, 2.1 million people had an opioid use disorder while 2 million people misused opioids for the first time and 886,000 people used heroin. Even more saddening is that those numbers are nearly two years old.

The simple question becomes, "Whose problem is it?" It is easiest to look the other way and thinking it won't happen to you or someone you love. But, at this rate you too will eventually get kicked in the face.

In less than two years I have been kicked in the face twice. Once by an overdose and near death of someone I love then again last week by the death of a friend's child. Most of us do the very best we can by and for the ones we love and care about; but, the access to heroin and other opioids is just too easy. Recently, I watched a 60 Minutes special on the topic, but still nothing changes. Nothing changes because there is too much money in it for those whose only care is how to get more money. It has long been said that money is the root of all evil and make no mistake the opioid epidemic is pure evil. The epidemic according to all sources is sponsored by those who thirst for more money, they can't seem to get enough and those paid to look the other way. The money grubbers have a very different but very real addiction as well. And, here I sit a father, friend, teacher and mayor seemingly powerless to do anything to shift the tide, powerless to ease the grief of a mother's and father's loss.

At this point I will simply say that elections matter. Until such point as *We the People* of the United States once again start voting in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity the opioid crisis and divisiveness that tears at the very fabric of our country will continue.

Our problems whether they be the opioid crisis, the divisiveness of current politics, the "debate" on climate change or anything of substantive matter has to be solved by all of us or it will persist and *We the People* will have no one to blame but ourselves when we become something very different than a "more perfect union."

I had planned to write about some real cool grant possibilities and the awesome graduates of 2019, but death kicked me in the face this week.

Until next week...