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Overdose Awareness Day held by Dufferin Caledon Drug Strategy Committee

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There is currently a crisis across the country of people overdosing on drugs, with some regions being especially hard hit.

The Dufferin Caledon Drug Strategy Committee hosted an International Overdose Awareness Day event on Thursday, Aug. 31, at the Dufferin County Paramedic Service building on Blind Line in Orangeville.

The event featured speakers sharing their own stories, along with displays and information from several healthcare, community service, and support groups.

It was the sixth year the event has been held in Orangeville.

?We want to get the message out that there is a lot of support,? explained Lynette Pole-Angon of the Dufferin Caledon Drug Strategy Committee. ?We have around 17 groups here that are community providers, including healthcare, and support groups that can help people with addictions.?

It was also a day to educate people about addiction and try to reduce the stigma attached to drug addiction.

There are many different pathways to drug addiction, and just because someone is addicted does not make them an inherently bad person.

One gentleman spoke to the audience, explaining that he has been sober for 33 years. He was introduced to substance abuse by his own father, who showed him how to inhale lacquer thinner.

It was help from his sister, who insisted he join a substance abuse help group that got him over his addiction.

A woman spoke of her sister, who died from an overdose 20 years ago at a young age, explaining she was a person who came from a decent background but ended up becoming an addict. She explained that everyone you see who is a drug addict is also someone's son, brother, daughter or sister, and they deserve to be helped.

An OPP officer discussed the Good Samaritan Law, which allows people to call the police for help if someone is overdosing without worrying about drug possession charges. The law is an effort to reduce the fear of police involvement if lifesaving measures are needed.

One of the initiatives the Drug Strategy Committee hopes to accomplish is to get naloxone kits out into the community.

Naloxone can reverse the effects of a drug overdose ? but only temporarily. It will, however, buy important time to be able to get a person to a hospital in time to save their life.

?We want to get the message out there that there is a lot of support,? Ms. Pole-Angon said. ?We want to get naxolone kits out into the community. You can get a kit for free at any pharmacy. We also sent a letter to businesses to give them information about naloxone kits.?

A recent report showed that some workplaces and industries have a higher rate of risk of overdose while on the job.

Naloxone kits were distributed free of charge at the event.