

Commissioner Gaiter's May Waverly Meeting

On May 18, 2016 Commissioner Steve Johnson hosted the Waverly meeting in Commissioner Gaiter's absence. His guests were Gary Darling, Larimer County's Director of Criminal Justice Services and Alisha Jeffers, Department Specialist for the Larimer County's Commissioner's Office. Mr. Darling's presentation concerned the growing need for services related to substance abuse and mental health issues. For decades non-profit agencies have been working with the sheriff's department; however, now the number of cases has outgrown the need.

Several years ago a Task Force of representatives of schools, faith based groups, hospitals, police departments, non-profit groups and private citizens from across the county met to set some Strategic Goals for the next ten years. One of the goals is "to address mental health issues and the development of enhanced behavioral health services in our community." To this end a committee has been active and a survey was sent out to the community.

This information has been gathered by the Sheriff's Department for Larimer County in the past ten years:

- Mental health issues are more effectively treated through medication than 10-20 years ago.
- Behavioral Health Disorders, including mental illness and substance abuse, are serious chronic health issues for 1 in 4 people in our community.
- Currently there are 326,000 people in Larimer County and an estimated 75,000 need behavioral health treatment but don't get help due to lack of appropriate care.
- Every dollar spent up front for treatment saves \$4-5 later on as untreated cases often are sent to emergency rooms or jail which costs taxpayers far more than traditional behavioral health services.
- At present, Larimer County does not have a detox center; the closest facility is in Greeley. Beds are rarely available as Weld County uses most of the beds.
- Approximately 1,400 people want services but can't get them.
- Since passage of the marijuana legalization law, more homeless people have moved to Colorado and have found they can't afford marijuana but, instead, buy the cheaper drug, heroin which costs less than a pack of cigarettes.

In late July a proposal will be made to the Commissioners to put the need for a new treatment center on the fall ballot. It is projected that the new facility will house services such as assessment, coordination of care (housing, food stamps, etc.), an acute treatment facility, medical staff, and serve the need of matching treatment to the individual. Staffing will be a combined effort of current non-profit community services and law enforcement. It is projected that approx 1089 intensive in/out patients will receive treatment and 3800 will receive some services. Estimated cost for the building is \$20 million and yearly operational costs would be \$15.7 million with \$4 million being recouped from insurance and other sources. Cost to the taxpayers would be .25 on \$100.

For more information, go to www.LarimerBehavioralHealth.org