



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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STORM BEACHES MULTIPLE BOATS ON HARBOR

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The opioid crisis hits home

Statewide effort has begun to battle the rising problem of opioid addiction, overdose deaths

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of stories about the opioid addiction epidemic and its impact on the county, region and state.

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Sentinel staff

In his final State of the State address Jan. 10, Gov. Chris Christie launched an ambitious strategy for combatting the rise of opioid abuse in the Garden State, which has resulted in skyrocketing deaths in New Jersey over the past decade.

According to data from the New Jersey Medical Examiner's Office, 1,587 people died from drug overdoses in 2015, a spike of 21 percent compared with 2014. Heroin overdoses rose to 961 in 2015 from 776 in 2014. Deaths from fentanyl, a synthetic opioid pain medication more potent than morphine, numbered 417 in 2015 compared with 142 in 2014.

Opioids kill about 90 Americans a day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The grim toll has only risen as more people from all walks of life find themselves addicts.

Christie's plan hits several points: education, treatment and prevention.

Christie announced the launch of a one-stop website, reachnj.gov, and a 24/7 help line, (844) REACHNJ, that will remove information barriers and significantly improve access to treatment.

The resources will provide treatment locations, insurance guidance, parental tips

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Kristen Kelleher
SENTINEL

Below, Joanna Dugan, who leads training classes to use Narcan for Urban Treatment Associates, displays the Narcan nasal spray after a class at Light-house Church in Cape May Court House.



'Tweak' initiatives in this county

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Sentinel staff

State Sen. Jeff Van Drew said he supports the governor's initiatives to stop the opioid problem, noting "little facets of it that need to be tweaked or changed a little bit."

Van Drew, a Democrat, represents the First Legislative District, which includes all of Cape May County and parts of Atlantic and Cumberland counties.

According to the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, Cape May County had 102 drug-related overdoses in 2013, 121 in 2014 and 110 in 2015. The

county saw 18 drug fatalities in 2013, 20 in 2014 and 20 in 2015.

Van Drew said he's keenly aware of the heroin problem in the county, having heard horror stories from local families.

"It's a real serious issue. There isn't a week that goes by where I don't hear from someone who either has the problem or has family who has the problem or had lost somebody because they had the problem. ... It is an epidemic," Van Drew said.

For Van Drew, Christie's proposal to combat opioid abuse makes sense, regarding expanding more beds for treatment rather than incarceration,

and educating children in public schools on the dangers of heroin.

"It's something we have to deal with. In everybody's family or group of friends or both, they know of someone who somehow and in some way is affected by this. The components of treatment and detoxification and education and insurance coverage all are necessary," Van Drew said.

One area in which Van Drew was critical concerned physicians' ability to prescribe painkillers. Van Drew, a dentist, said for patients, especially those dealing with cancer or other se-

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Narcan classes a means to save lives

By KRISTEN KELLEHER
Sentinel staff

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overdose deaths increased more than 16 percent from 2014 to 2015 in New Jersey, which had 1,454 drug-overdose deaths in 2015.

To reduce the number of deaths, Atlantic and Cape May counties offer free

training to use Narcan, a nasal spray version of naloxone hydrochloride, which can stop or reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, according to the FDA.

In both counties, the training is provided by Urban Treatment Associates.

According to Joanna Dugan, the program coordinator, the two-hour training covers opiate drug treatment, how to recognize and

respond to an overdose, rescue breathing, how to administer naloxone and information about resources. The training is open to anyone over age 18.

Each session can accommodate 20 people, and Dugan said the sessions usually fill up.

"We encourage anybody to come to be trained, family members, loved ones," Dugan said. "You don't have to

have any credentials for it."

In 2015, among Cape May County residents who entered substance abuse treatment, nearly 50 percent, 1,058 total, of those who did so listed heroin as their primary drug.

Among Atlantic County residents, 52 percent of those who entered treatment, or 2,304, listed heroin as their

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Cape May seeks no tax increase in 2017 budget

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Interim City Manager Neil Young presented his 2017 municipal budget to City Council with a zero tax increase. His proposed budget would not raise property taxes or water/sewer rates.

At a Jan. 24 special meeting, auditor Leon Costello said council had until March 21, the date of a public hearing, to make any desired changes to the budget.

The municipal budget totals \$28.2 million, up \$242,075, or 1.4 percent, from last year's 27.8 million spending plan. A total of \$9.5 million, or 54 percent, is to be raised by local purpose taxes.

The local purpose tax rate will remain the same as last year at 33.9 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

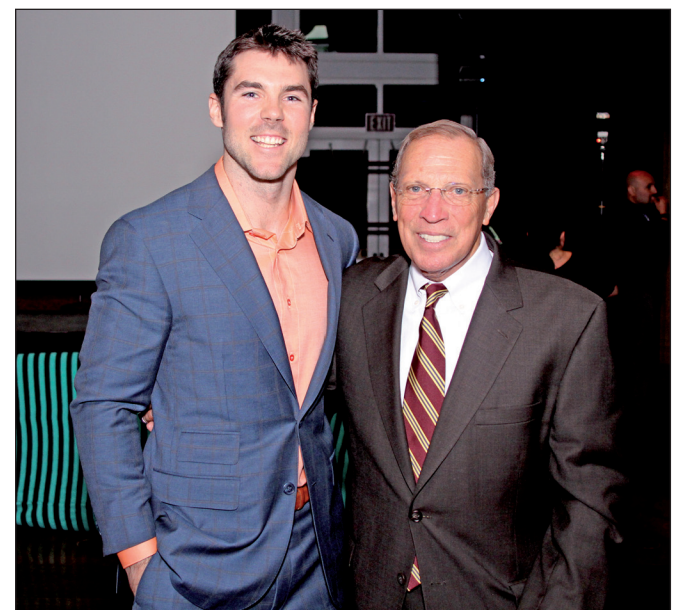
The spending plan includes \$17.6 million for the current fund, \$2.4 million for the beach utility, \$1.1 million for the tourism utility and \$7 million for the water/sewer utility.

The four budget categories are showing increases of 1.4 percent for the current fund to 2.9 percent for the tourism utility over last year, according to Young. The current fund represents 62 percent of the city's overall budget.

He said the budget continues the current level of services expected by residents and visitors while allowing the city to maintain a healthy reserve balance. The city has not had a tax increase in two years, with minimal increases for the three previous years.

On the revenue side of the budget, Young noted the city receives more than \$1 million from parking meter collections and \$1 million from room tax on accommodations. The city receives \$482,000 from renting and leasing city-owned properties, \$323,000 from providing emergency medical services and \$725,000 for providing police services to West Cape May and Cape May Point. Parking meter

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John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE
Lower Township resident and Chicago Cubs outfielder Matt Szczur, left, stand with Villanova football coach emeritus Andy Talley during the fundraiser Jan. 27 at Convention Hall.

Szczur hosts fundraiser for bone marrow testing

By JOHN COOKE
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Convention Hall was filled Jan. 27 with more than 350 fans and supporters of Chicago Cubs outfielder and Lower Township resident Matt Szczur.

The second annual "Szczur-the-Day" benefit for the Andy Talley Bone Marrow Foundation was hosted by the Lower Cape May Regional High School and Villanova University alum.

Villanova head football coach emeritus Andy Talley started the foundation in 2010 after nearly two decades of testing athletes to be matches for bone marrow donations. In spring 2008, Talley partnered with the Be the Match organization, catapulting his testing idea nationwide.

While a student at Villanova, Szczur participated in Talley's Bone Marrow Match program. During a

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WASHINGTON INN

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THE WINE BAR

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\$5

glasses of wine

appetizers specials

With a 4 course Prix Fixe menu with prices at \$49 or \$75

Open Saturdays through March