

Real Problems, **Our Problems**

by James M. Decker At the recent West Texas Rural Summit, drug addiction—causes, challenges, solutions—was a hot topic. This is a complicated topic that has been on my heart for a while. I hope my readers indulge me as I start a multi-part series on drugs. If we are serious about addressing this problem in our communities, and we should be, this topic deserves a comprehensive look, not just a As we work to improve our communitiesbeautify them, bring jobs and amenities, make them more prosperous for all-drugs must be tackled by all of our community leaders.

When we think about drugs in our community, a few easy images come to mind. We think of marijuana. We think of outof-town dealers selling to our locals. We almost certainly think of people cooking and using Those images are all accurate pieces of the puzzle. But the puzzle itself is far more complicated and concerning.

In the last few years, we've heard a lot in the news about America's "opioid crisis," but it's hard to talk about why it matters in our communities without defining it. In short, the opioid crisis is an epidemic of drug abuse, death, and community decay arising from abuse of prescription painkillers known as "opioids."

Opioids became available on a prescription basis in the 1990s, with recognizable names like OxyContin, Percocet, and Vicodin. Their use has proliferated in shocking ways. A 2017 government study found that Americans consume more opioids than any country in the Enough opioids were prescribed in the U.S. in 2015 to medicate every American around the clock for three weeks. The effects of this usage

According to the CDC, opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999. You might think that opioids are a problem, but not in our area. That is not so. CBS News reported that, in 2015, drug overdoses killed more than 50,000 people in America. That 2017 government study found that TWO-THIRDS of all American drug overdoses came from opioids. CBS noted that drug overdoses kill more Americans than either car accidents or guns. In only a few decades of widespread use, opioids are now a stunning percentage of American drug

According to the National Institutes of Health, the powerful opioid fentanyl is the most widely

used opioid in America and causes over half of opioid overdose deaths in America. Fentanyl can also be made illegally, like meth, and is often mixed with heroin or cocaine for more powerful effects. Much addiction to "hard" drugs follows a path from prescription drugs. According to the USDA, 3 out of 4 heroin users began with prescription drugs.

Drugs are a shocking problem in America, but here's the sobering reality. When 2/3 of drug overdoses come from opioids, drug addiction isn't the result of some wealthy foreign kingpin straight out of a 1980s movie. The causes are much closer to home, and much more concerning.

Why does this matter to us? Drug overdose rates are higher in rural America than the country at large. Why? Rural jobs can be more physical in creating opportunity for prescription use and addiction. Self-medication is a "solution" for lacking economic opportunity, which is prevalent in rural America. Drug use is harder to combat with rural communities' limited resources. Law enforcement resources are an issue, but communities also lack treatment and rehab options, as well as quality housing for an addict to escape their past and get a fresh

Drugs are not a far off "city" problem. They're our problem. Moving forward in the next few weeks, I hope to spark conversation and solutions to that problem.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.



Bronte ISD Breakfast

Monday, September 10

Pizza or choice of cereal and toast, juice, milk

Tuesday, September 11

Donuts or choice of cereal and toast, juice, milk

Wednesday, September 12

PB&J or choice of cereal and toast juice, milk Thursday, September 13

Tornado or choice of cereal

and toast, juice, milk

Friday, September 14

Biscuit and sausage or choice of cereal and toast, juice, milk

Lunch

Monday, September 10

Ham and cheese melt, baby carrots, broccoli salad, applepineapple, milk

Tuesday, September 11

Nacho Grande, refried beans, salsa, tomato cup, cucumber slices, peaches, milk

Wednesday, September 12

Chicken sandwich, tots, veggie

cup, Mandarin oranges, milk

Thursday, September 13

Hamburger steak, roasted potatoes, garden salad, biscuits, fruity jello, milk

Friday, September 14

Corn dogs, smiley fries, beans, apple slices, sherbet cup, milk

Blackwell CISD

Breakfast

Monday, September 10

Poptart, fruit, juice, milk

Tuesday, September 11 Breakfast burrito fruit, juice,

Wednesday, September 12

Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice,

Thursday, September 13

Ham, egg, and cheese combo bar, fruit, juice, milk

Friday, September 14

PBJ or oatmeal round, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch Monday, September 10

Taco Salad Bowl (shell, ground beef, cheese, lettuce, tomatoes), pinto beans, Spanish rice, fruit,

Tuesday, September 11

Spaghetti, corn on the cob, salad, garlic toast, fruit, milk

Wednesday, September 12

Homemade meatloaf, mashed potatoes, glazed carrots, hot roll, fruit, milk

Thursday, September 13

Chicken fajitas, Spanish rice, refried beans, salad, fruit, milk

Friday, September 14

Chicken sandwich, potato cubes, baked beans, fruit, milk

Robert Lee ISD **Breakfast**

Monday, September 10

Pancakes, sausage, fruit, juice,

Tuesday, September 11

Burrito, hashbrown, fruit, juice,

Wednesday, September 12

Power breakfast, fruit, juice,

Thursday, September 13

Piggies, yogurt, fruit, juice,

Friday, September 14

Griddle sandwich, fruit, juice,

Lunch

Monday, September 10

Corn dog, tator tots, baked beans, apple-pineapple delight,

Tuesday, September 11

Nachos grande, beans, salsa, cucumber slices, lime sherbet, garnish, milk

Wednesday, September 12

Chicken sandwich, fries, corn, sliced veggies, Mandarin oranges,

Thursday, September 13

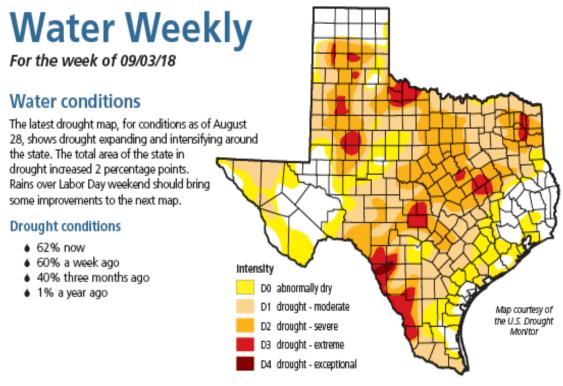
Asian bowl, egg roll, rice, salad, fruity gelatin, milk

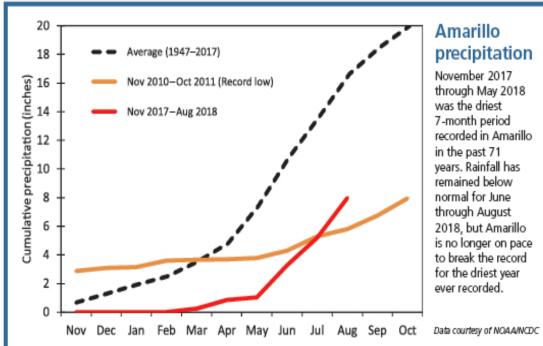
Friday, September 14

Pizza, carrots, broccoli salad, fresh fruit, graham crackers, milk

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Email: ObserverEnterprise @gmail.com





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