

When the two largest farm organizations teamed up to bring attention to the opioid epidemic in farm country, the Minnesota Farm Bureau (MFB) Foundation knew that we needed to share this story. MFB decided to develop an innovative and comprehensive program that included a variety of outreach bringing resources to our members, our communities and leadership across the state of Minnesota.

The Opioid Crisis in Farm Country project was created by the MFB Foundation to engage our members in the opioid crisis in our communities. This is a farm safety issue, and our approach was to share resources that help keep our farm families and communities safe.

Grant

The MFB Foundation received a grant through the Rx Abuse Leadership Initiative (RALI) which provided the

TAKING ACTION AGAINST THE OPIOID CRISIS



dollars to develop and facilitate our program and to promote FarmTownStrong.org. Our first grant was \$25,000. We were later successful in receiving an additional grant of \$20,000. Both of these grants also included 15,000 Deterra medicine deactivation kits to distribute.

Committee

Our program began with the MFB Promotion & Education Committee identifying the opioid epidemic as part of the committee's farm safety priorities which then led to community meetings at the local level. County Farm Bureau leaders were asked to assist in inviting anyone they felt was a stakeholder. Those in attendance included teachers, doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists, legislators, farmers, clergy, coaches, social service representatives, nurses and home health care providers. We had

in depth conversations about the scope of the crisis, policy, impacts on social services and safe disposal of unused medicine. As Farm Bureau leaders, we can talk about the crisis from a practical view. Many individuals do not understand the dynamics of farming which include long hours of work, high injury rate, stress and resiliency, and sometimes the distance our farm/ranch families are from care (hospitals, treatment and recovery centers, rehabilitation, etc.).

Outreach

The community meetings allowed us to develop new unique partnerships. RALI of Minnesota is an alliance of more than 20 local, state and national organizations committed to finding solutions to end the opioid crisis. Ruth Meirick, foundation director spoke at several of their events on our work addressing this issue with our rural communities and farm families along with our efforts to teach others how to properly dispose of unused medicine. In addition, RALI has worked with MFB on public service announcements and a major advertising campaign promoting our fight against the opioid crisis and FarmTownStrong.org. The radio ads ran on numerous radio stations in the major metro areas of Minnesota (Minneapolis, Rochester, St. Paul, St. Cloud, Duluth), and the ads have been placed in news outlets across Minnesota. In addition, many interviews have been conducted that were earned media not paid media.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) asked MFB to be involved in several programs. Last fall, we interacted with Minnesota care coordinators at their state meeting. These care coordinators assist counties with home care, such as hospice, and they are at the forefront of dealing with unused medicine. Showing them that there are options for safe disposal is crucial.

The Code 3 Association mobile



exhibit was brought to Minnesota. This exhibit is a mockup of a teenager's bedroom designed to educate about the possible warning signs of drug use and/or misuse. Law enforcement and experts were on hand to guide participants through the trailer educating about warning signs, potential areas of concern and how caregivers can talk to their teens. This exhibit traveled to three locations across Minnesota, to the MFB office and was at IDEA's Farmfest.

Ruth Meirick spoke at the Minnesota Association of Counties Opioid Summit. At the meeting county and state officials and a variety of staff from across departments learned about the nature of addiction and see that the problem is more than a law enforcement issue, hear how this crisis is impacting counties from law enforcement to out-of-home placements, and provided the opportunity to share best practices from counties that have already implemented innovative programs that are having positive impacts in their communities. MFB Foundation feels strongly that we need to be at the table having these discussions and participating in the conversations, especially due to the impacts that we are seeing statistically.

Resources

All county Farm Bureaus received a copy of the Opioid Abuse in Rural America Farm Bureau Resource Guide



Opioid Crisis in Rural America

that was created by MFB Foundation to assist counties when planning outreach meetings. The guide provides infographics, Q&A, statistics, how county Farm Bureaus can be involved as well as several resources to find additional information and help.

We all have a role to play in preventing prescription drug misuse. MFB Foundation has promoted efforts that everyone must do their part in addressing the opioid crisis, and one way to do so is to safely dispose of unneeded prescription medicines. We have distributed nearly 15,000 Deterra prescription medicine disposal kits. Our members have shared the disposal kits, along with a small resource card developed by MFB Foundation at national night outs, Breakfast on the Farms, county fairs, county annual meetings and other events.

Awareness

In addition, MFB held a panel discussion at the Farm Bureau National Health & Safety Conference, spoke at AFBF Communication Conference and AFBF Annual Convention, hosted speakers on this topic at state wide meetings, held a webinar, continued conversations with elected and appointed officials, worked with 4-H and Extension agents to address the opioid crisis, worked with FFA to begin the conversations with chapter members with the state winning FFA marketing plan focused on addressing the opioid crisis and distributed information at Farmfest.

Through these efforts, Farm Bureau raised the awareness that farmers and

rural America need a voice in addressing and solving this issue that is impacting our families and communities and demonstrated why people should be proud to be a member of an organization that advocates for safe communities and strong families.

Deterra Kits

Through our partnership with RALI, we have worked with many organizations to help spread the message and distribute nearly 15,000 Deterra medicine disposal pouches which have information cards stapled to them that we created. They were distributed at events such as:

- ▼ Farm Bureau Events
 - ▼ Farmfest
 - ▼ National Night Outs
 - ▼ State and County events (fairs, banquets, annual meetings, safety fairs)
 - ▼ Public Health requests
 - ▼ Local Law Enforcement requests
- Verde Co. research indicates that 96% of all individuals use the Deterra prescription medicine deactivation kits within three days. Knowing this we can calculate that 14,400 kits had the potential of removing over 432,000 unused pills from homes throughout Minnesota.

Speakers and Outreach

- ▼ Kirk Hughes from the Minnesota Poison Control (MPC) at 2019 MFB LEAP Conference and conducted a Minnesota Farm Bureau Lunch N' Learn webinar which is on our YouTube site.
- ▼ Dr. Chris Johnson, Susan Burggraf - Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and Kirk Hughes-MPC on AFBF Health and Safety Conference opioid panel hosted by MFB
- ▼ Dr. Chris Johnson at the MFB Annual Meeting on the Opioid Crisis - he chaired the Minnesota Opioid Prescription Workgroup and is recognized nationally on the topic for his work.

Minnesota Farm Bureau Staff Spoke at Events

- ▼ MN Association of Counties Opioid Crisis Summit (300 Attendees)
- ▼ MN Department of Health Care Coordinators Conference (400 attendees)
- ▼ RALI Press Conference
- ▼ Over 20 earned radio interviews
- ▼ Numerous county Farm Bureau annual meetings and fall banquets
- ▼ 2019 AFBF Annual Meeting
- ▼ 2019 AFBF Fusion Conference Breakout Speaker
- ▼ Rice County Mutual Insurance (40 attendees)
- ▼ Managed Care Organizations in Bloomington (50 attendees)
- ▼ New Ulm Farm Show (cancelled due to weather)
- ▼ Minnesota Ag Communicators (25 attendees)
- ▼ Wright County Public Health and Howard Lake Waverly Winsted FFA meeting (120 attendees)
- ▼ MN Department of Health (MDH) statewide video conference
- ▼ "Voice of the Stakeholder" meeting with Verde Co. Maker of DeTerra drug deactivation kits. Audience members included Drug Enforcement Agency, individuals from educational foundations CADCA (CADCA is a nonprofit organization that is committed to creating safe, healthy and drug-free communities globally), National Consumers League, Teamsters, Retired Members of Congress, parent advocates and staff from RALI.
- ▼ Met with former (at meeting she was current) U.S. Undersecretary Ann Hazlett on the impacts of the opioid crisis in rural America and what MFB is doing to address the crisis.
- ▼ Minnesota Department of Health webinar (400 people)

Coordination of Outreach Meetings

- ▼ Southwest Minnesota held in Luverne and Southeast Minnesota held in Winona with local law enforcement, health care representation, legislators, farmers, teachers, veterinarians and Farm Bureau staff.
- ▼ Informational meeting for new members of the Minnesota legislature. Participants had the opportunity to understand what MFB is doing to help fight the opioid epidemic and to learn more about Farmtownstrong.org and the Morning Consult Survey.

All of these efforts from the grassroots up come from a desire to keep our members and their communities a safe place to live and farm. Learn more at farmtownstrong.org.

