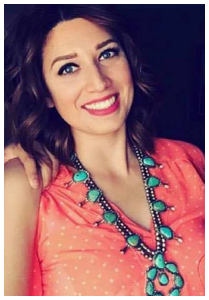

With a side helping of prevention, alternative sentencing, treatment

The DWI reports listed each week in the *Gallup Sun* are a testament to the size of the problem in McKinley County. Despite the arrests and any ensuing fines or sentences, convictions continue.

The McKinley County DWI Program is set up to spread awareness of the consequences and dangers of these intoxicated driving as well as other alcohol misuse issues.

The county's DWI program aims to reduce the number of DWI arrests and fatalities and keep them low in a manner that is respectful to the local diverse cultures.

Maura Schanefelt, program manager for the McKinley County DWI Program, spoke with the *Su n*
April 1 to highlight multiple aspects of the program.

“We wanted to do a bit on the program that the community is not aware of,” she said. “We want to show the areas that are not as talked about as the DWI offenders, treatment, or prosecutors.”

Schanefelt said one of the myths about the program is that it is only focused on DWIs and people who have one, which she said is not the case.

The Local Driving While Intoxicated Bureau is not against drinking, but rather wants people to have an informed, educated opinion about alcohol and understand what it means to drink responsibly, she added.

“We do our best to provide services to everyone, and if we cannot provide the necessary services we are more than happy to find an organization that can,” she said. “Our treatment is for all substances, not only alcohol, and an individual does not need to have had a DWI arrest or charge to participate.”

Funded by the Local Driving While Intoxicated Grant through the LDWI Bureau under the Department of Finance and Administration, the McKinley County DWI Program tackles the challenges of DWI in the community through eight methods.

1. **Prevention**: Two Prevention Specialists travel all over McKinley County to Chapter Houses, schools, events, senior centers, Boys & Girls Clubs with presentations and/or evidence-based curriculums to prevent and reduce instances of alcohol misuse.

The ‘Prevention’ component also includes a Victim Impact Panel. The program hosts it every other month, or at least six times a year.

“We are always looking for speakers, and we’re hoping to get more victims or family members of victims and survivors to tell their story,” Schanefelt said. “The audience at a Victim Impact Panel have been arrested for a DWI, so we are sensitive to who we have as a speaker to ensure they are emotionally equipped to speak to this unique audience.”

Our program collaborates with many other providers in the County, as well as organizations outside of the County, such as MADD and other DWI programs.

“We’ve just begun discussing a collaboration with Lou Go’s Taxi that will hopefully get picked back up once the travel bans and shelter in place orders are lifted,” Schanefelt said. “We know alcohol misuse and DWIs don’t stop during a crisis. Oftentimes, this is when they pick up.”

Every quarter of the year, the program creates a theme to educate the community. The program invests in year-round advertising, PSAs for the radio, a movie theater ad, a billboard on the north side of Gallup, and numerous ads in newspapers and social media.

“Right now, we’ve created signage from Butler’s [Office Supplies] to be posted all over the county,” Schanefelt said. “This is our way of outreach without having to be in person.”

2. **Treatment**: The Intensive Outpatient Program is being evaluated by a Licensed Master in Social Work in order to receive state certification. The DWI program has two Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors facilitating the treatment program.

Under this component, the program also provides free community trainings that are geared towards counselors, therapists, first responders such as Ethics, Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care and workshops for Vicarious Trauma.

3. **Screening**: This involves an alcohol assessment either on paper or computer system with a Licensed Substance Abuse Associate, who will go over the assessment and spend about 30 minutes one-on-one to provide the best individualized treatment options. The LSAA often sees

people who live in Arizona or outside the county and will help them find treatment close to where they live.

The program's administrative assistant keeps an up-to-date resource list for clients if they choose to seek other providers or need additional treatment for depression or trauma that the program cannot provide.

4. **Compliance Monitoring**: Individuals may be placed on GPS bracelet or an alcohol monitor anklet. All of the participants check in and have random urine analysis testing per court order.

The Compliance office is still open but is restricting public access. Most check-ins are currently being done telephonically. For more info, call Chris Sice, compliance program manager at (505)726-8990.

5. **Planning, Coordination and Evaluation**: The program has two evaluators, one who oversees prevention and the other who oversees treatment.

6. **Alternative Sentencing**: Currently, the majority of DWI cases in McKinley County are not prosecuted, and the perpetrator often is just released on their own recognizance or on bail. The program has a contract with the District Attorney's Office to provide a DWI Clerk whose role is to fill in the gaps that lead to these cases not being prosecuted.

7. **Law Enforcement**: The program works closely with the McKinley County DWI Task Force to aid with decreasing DWIs. This includes finding multiple areas to give out information about the program and inform people about the consequences of DWI.

As such, residents often see program members at DWI at sobriety checkpoints handing out info cards and other trinkets, such as fuzzy pens for kids.

8. **Alcohol-related Domestic Violence**: The program collaborates with Sexual Assault

Services and Battered Families Inc.

In addition to components for DWI offenders, victims, or families, the program aims to educate middle schoolers on numerous DWI issues, including coping with negative emotions, describing the myths and realities of smoking and drinking, and how messages from the media and other people can influence them. Students can learn key skills to keep themselves safe by recognizing troublesome signs of alcohol or other types of substance abuse.

As of April 1, the program has had to close its doors temporarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are still checking emails and phone messages. The treatment program is strictly telephonic at this time.

Schanefelt said they have also set up a Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/mckinleydwi/ , where they plan to do live Q&A's at least once a month to address comments and questions.

For more information on the McKinley County DWI Program and its services, call (505)726-8249 or contact Maura Schanefelt at maura.schanefelt@co.mckinley.nm.us .

By Cody Begaye
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