***An Encouraging Report on the OPIOID Battle***

It’s always good to read a positive story relating to Wisconsin’s opioid epidemic.

On June 9, 2017 WFRV-TV in Green Bay ran a story on “**Fighting opioid addiction in Wisconsin's corrections system”.**  (By Kris Schuler – Netcast Broadcasting) A pilot program aimed at helping criminal offenders within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections system who are battling opioid addiction has seen positive results in a new milestone. The program was begun because corrections officers saw that relapses were common after addicts who had been progressing in their recovery left the structure that was provided in prison. The pilot program was run in Northeast Wisconsin because of a rapid rise in opioid use there, especially heroin. Lawmakers approved $1.7 million for the 2015 and '16 budget years to fund the pilot program. One year ago these individuals - all addicted to opioids - started a 12-month program of intensive counseling and a monthly shot of a drug named Vivitrol, which blocks opioid cravings.

Nathan Lecker, 30, a Green Bay resident was one of the first participants in the program. Pot smoking evolved to heroin use in his 20s and began his road to behaviors that lead to prison. He said he was clean when he left jail after the first time. But on his own he struggled and eventually resumed his heroin use. "I got clean, got out, no support, and just fell back into the same habit again”. But now "I've got a steady job, I've got a great working relationship with my (probation officer). Starting to make new friends — better friends! My family's real supportive, my friends are real supportive. I'm happy with life." (Doug Schneider, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin June 9, 2017)

Representative John Nygren (R-Marinette), a leading advocate to end opioid addiction, says the state spends $35,000 a year to care for these offenders. Helping them get clean and straight - makes better sense. It makes sense that we’re investing in a long-term sobriety and not just a revolving door of our corrections system,” said Nygren.  Nygren says this was the first DOC graduation of a Vivitrol program in the country.  He'll push for future funding in the upcoming state budget.

Sherry Jelic – CHE Chair – Partners of WHA