

Road to Recovery

by Audrey Stepp

Over 142,000,000
Opioid prescriptions given in the
U.S. in 2020.

1 in 4
People become addicted after
long term prescriptions.

75%
of drug overdose deaths in 2020
involved opioids.

Over 932,000
Lives taken by opioid overdose
since 1999.

Sources: Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Although addiction can feel like an uphill battle, there is hope.

Addiction affects people every day, but recovery options are becoming more prevalent.

The road to recovery from Substance Use Disorder is unique for every individual, treatment experiences are different and ever changing. Over the years, the options for treatment and recovery have greatly expanded due to the rise of the Opioid Epidemic. This has resulted in more options for patients locally.

Addiction is a chronic, progressive and often fatal disease and although addiction cannot be cured, it is possible to manage. It is extremely important to find treatment that works for each individual case and implement safety protocols such as Overdose Rescue Training and other Harm Reduction strategies. "I am tired of seeing kids, moms, dads and family members in general have to bury their loved ones due to addiction. I know that there is hope and lives can be saved by reaching out and trying to help one another," Justin Broughton, founder of Robert Alexander Center (RAC) in Mt. Washington said.

Treatment and recovery availability within our community are vital.

"Substance Abuse, 9 times out of 10, causes depression for the addict, which is also scary because that person will start to think or believe that their life has no value," Lexi Jones, a daughter of a parent in Long Term Recovery, said. The Opioid Epidemic has caused lots of heartache for families due to the amount of deaths. Kentucky is usually ranked around 3rd in the nation for overdose/poisoning deaths.

With so much loss, more strategies have been developed to manage this illness. Traditional non-medication treatment such as 12 step programs, counseling and group meetings are still widely used today. In recent years, evidence-based medications have been implemented such as naloxone/ narecan, fentanyl test strips, and prescriptions such as Vivitrol. "We have tons of options for recovery in this day and age. We have halfway houses, 28 day programs, 30 day programs, 90 day programs, long term programs, IOP (intensive outpatient). Everyone's story is different and needs are different so get in touch with someone in the recovery community and find out what best suits them or they can contact myself and I will help them figure out what they need to do and will direct them," David Heath, a person in Long Term Recovery, said.

Recovery is so important because of the mental and the physical toll it could take on the patient's health.

Broughton of RAC said, "Addiction has affected our local community in many ways. Recently, due to the isolation protocols of COVID-19 I have seen more people become addicted to alcohol or other substances due to having too much downtime and lack of unity or connection with their normal everyday routines." Addiction affects us locally in a more emotional way as well. "I have also seen addiction affect our community by way of people losing their lives. Mount Washington is such a small, tight-knit community where everyone knows everyone. When something tragic happens, it not only impacts the family but also the community as a whole. When battling addiction, it affects the entire family, not just the addict/alcoholic," Broughton said.

One recovery option that we have locally is the RAC rehab recovery program. "Our treatment goal is to physically and emotionally stabilize individuals and to provide appropriate clinical and medical interventions and support for those struggling with substance use disorders and those that love them," Broughton said. There are many different treatments at RAC. "What I see work best is when someone completes Detox, Residential, Partial Hospitalization, Intensive outpatient and continues outpatient

totaling 6-7 months of continuous programming and accountability," Broughton said.

Recovery is a long and delicate process that consists of lots of trial and error. "For anyone who has a family member, parent, friend or just a loved one in general who's struggling with addiction, please know that your feelings are valid. You are not alone. And most importantly, absolutely none of what you're going through is your fault. Never blame yourself. I understand what you're going through and there's always someone to talk to. Things do get better, keep hope no matter what," Jones said.

Personal experience in rehab and recovery is different for everyone, you just have to find what works for you. "As far as the Addict goes, in the beginning we hold onto the idea that recovery is extra and that we can figure it out on our own. Well I tried to figure it out for 10 years and failed miserably. It wasn't until I was broken enough to ask for help and actually try recovery that I got better," Heath said. "Getting my family back, making amends for all the harm I caused and not breaking another promise. True peace of mind and the ability to deal with emotions without putting a substance in my body," Heath said. If you, or someone you know is struggling with substances of any kind, reach out and talk to someone.



BARRIERS TO THE

BALLOT BOX

by Brooklyn Sauer

The United States has changed, but its systems of voter suppression have not. Voter suppression has existed since this nation's founding, and the country still struggles with giving equal voting opportunities to all of its citizens.

We saw during the 2020 election just how useful mail-in ballots are in the voting process, although many states are trying to stick to traditional voting. The two-party system is also a rapidly emerging form of voter suppression. Felons and ex-felons struggle with their voting rights across the country as well.

While holding a presidential election during a pandemic, the United States learned of the benefits of mail-in ballots and early voting while navigating through the policies surrounding them. After these times, we cannot deny that these practices are incredibly helpful and allow an easier voting process. However, after former President Donald Trump's spread of misinformation regarding fraud associated with mail-in ballots, many have become adverse to the idea. Despite Trump's claims, it has been proven that voter fraud by mail is not a widespread issue and there have been no proveable cases in which mail-in ballot fraud has changed the outcome of an election. Therefore, the re-implementation of laws that require a valid excuse to receive an absentee ballot, done by 15 states nationwide, is unnecessary. These laws will only end up causing more harm and making it harder for those who can't or do not want to vote in person to still have a say in elections.

Political parties, specifically the two-party system, has had a negative reputation in America since its conception, and its issues have only become more apparent as time goes on. As a system that contributes most or all of its electoral votes to one of two parties, the two-party system is naturally polarizing and leaves little room for nuance, forcing voters to choose between two parties that might not support all of their most important values. This creates a situation where a large majority of voters have to settle for which candidate is the lesser of two uninteresting options. In contrast, a multi-party system allows the voter to find a candidate that represents their values well. It leaves room for more nuanced conversations surrounding highly debated topics such as taxes, military spending, healthcare, etc. as opposed to making them a black and white issue.

The two-party system has evolved into a form of voter suppression. In addition to oversimplifying issues, the system

encourages voter apathy. For example, many voters find that third party candidates better represent their values, yet a vote for them is often considered "wasted" as the candidate will almost certainly not win. This censors their voice in government, not allowing them to elect a candidate they truly believe will better their country. Since the electors from the electoral college from each state will go with the popular vote, a vote for the minority political party in a state will have little to no effect. However, a multi-party system will further divide up the parties in each state, giving the former minority voter a better chance of their preferred party becoming the majority in their state. The lack of an opportunity for these voters to have an equitable voice in their government and policies is a flaw in our current voting system and indicates a change that needs to be made.

Disenfranchisement is not a punishment. The violation of a citizen's constitutional right to vote devalues the democratic system that the United States has put in place, which leads us further away from our original goal of being a free, democratic nation. Felons in prison will, most likely, one day be out of that prison in a world and under policies of which they had no say on whatsoever. While a few states keep the rights of a felon in place throughout their incarceration, a majority of the country puts many laws and hoops to jump through in the way of felons and their right to vote, including Kentucky. In fact, Kentucky has some of the strictest laws regarding ex-felon voting rights, even going so far as to permanently banning some felons from voting based on the crime they were admitted for. On the other hand, only the District of Columbia, Vermont and Maine do not strip felons of their suffrage once convicted. In general, stripping these felons of their voting rights is a slippery slope of logic which can lead to others having their rights stripped away as well under its precedent.

"BLOODY MONDAY"

Voter suppression has existed since our nation's founding, and you need not look further for proof than an event in Kentucky's own history.

Aug. 6 1855, an election day. The United States was experiencing a great immigration surge, causing Louisville's population to be almost a quarter immigrants. The Know-Nothings, an explicitly anti-immigrant party popular in Louisville at the time, wanted to find a way to stop these new immigrants from voting and possibly changing the outcome of the election. Thus began the instigating of Protestant mobs to form around voting locations. Armed with guns, they began to intimidate immigrant voters into not voting, eventually leading to riots and the burning of buildings. In the end, the fighting had caused over 20 to die and a mass exodus of immigrants to neighboring cities. This extreme display of nationalism, later given the title of "Bloody Monday", and suppression of voters exhibits the ways in which voter suppression is embedded in the roots of our country.

Another issue with felon disenfranchisement is the disproportionate amount of people of color that are affected by the prison system. Black and hispanic populations are incarcerated at much higher rates than white populations, due to the discrimination that these communities face in the criminal justice system. According to a 2017 U.S. Census Bureau report, while only 12% of the population was black, black people made up 33% of U.S. prisoners. This is compared to the 64% overall white population and the 30% white prisoner population. Numerous other studies have returned similar results, and the cases popularized by the Black Lives Matter movement show the effects of this prejudice. In the end, this trend leads to fewer people of color being allowed to use their voice towards putting people in office that will benefit them and their communities.

With the flaws in our current voting laws and processes becoming more apparent as we go into our country's future, we find ourselves at a crossroads. One of the pillars that this country was built on was deriving our powers from the consent of the governed. However, how can the government be powerful enough to lead us into our future if not everyone has an equal opportunity to voice that consent?

MORE THAN MYTHOLOGY

by Macie Brown and Kylie Huber

Pushed under the rug.

Throughout history, sexual assault has been covered up and made an uncomfortable topic.

Our society in the past has made the idea of being a victim of sexual assault shameful and many were left isolated and looked down upon for reaching out for help. Victims were often left hopeless and were not given the proper attention or help they deserved. More aid is being given to victims today to help them with the effects of what has happened to them. Despite all of the growth society has made, many feel that there are still ways we can get better.

Officer Ed Johnson feels that part of the reason cases of sexual assault weren't taken as serious in the past was because people didn't understand the different reactions victims had. "Most people would think that someone that was victimized would be very dramatic and crying and I think over the years we have learned that that is not always the case," Johnson said. Not everyone is going to have the same reaction to the same situation. One person could be hysterical while another can be calm, just because someone's reaction is different doesn't mean they are less hurt.

Another issue with reports of sexual assault is the lack of ability to get good evidence. "A lot of times it is just one person's word against another because there will be a delay in reporting," Johnson said. Rape kits can be performed, but they only work within a certain amount of time. If there are no witnesses or nothing to prove that it happened, not much can be done. A lot of times the delay in reporting is caused by fear of not being believed or just being scared to be open up about and recount the situation.

In today's world people are growing to understand sexual assault a little better. Movements such as the "Me Too Movement" and the "Take Back The Night Foundation" were made to bring awareness to sexual assault and comfort victims. These programs comfort victims by letting them know they aren't alone in what they are going through. Both not only provide resources to victims, but also help with how to support someone who has suffered this trauma.

In 2017, the MeToo movement picked up a lot of momentum after many women started coming forward about the abuse they endured from Harvey Weinstein. This caused other men and women to come forward with their experiences not only with Weinstein, but with others. Singer/songwriter Lady Gaga talked about her experience with a producer when she was 19. She said that she was told her music would be burned if she didn't take her clothes off. When talking about the producers, Gaga said on episode one of *The Me You Can't See*, "They didn't stop asking me, and I just froze and I... I don't even remember."

Gaga said that after she was raped, she was left throwing up and pregnant on a street corner at her parents' house and she still has PTSD from the incident. "I understand that some people feel really comfortable with this, and I do not. I do not

ever want to face that person again," Gaga said on *The Me You Can't See*. Even though she will talk about her experience, she still is very scared to mention who it was just because of the trauma she still faces years later. This is one of the reasons so many victims don't feel comfortable coming out about their experiences. They have so much fear and trauma and don't know how people will respond. Getting hate or not being believed is something that will only add to the hard times that these victims are trying to get through.

Terry Crews, an actor from the show *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, came out about his experiences of being groped by a male agency executive at a Hollywood party. He saw so many people meeting women's claims of sexual assault with skepticism and claiming they just wanted to be famous.

When being interviewed about the topic, Crews said "I literally was like, 'That's not what this is about at all. This is not how it works.'" Crews was also met with a backlash after coming out about what happened to him. When talking about the situation, comedian D.L. Hughley said "God gave you muscles, so you can say no."

Actor James Van Der Beek was also assaulted by other men while working. Van Der Beek addressed the situation on Twitter where he said "I understand the unwarranted shame, powerlessness

and inability to blow the whistle. There's a power dynamic that feels impossible to overcome." Having to come out and speak against or possibly face the person who overpowered you can be extremely intimidating and make you feel like you have no power against them. Victims can also be uncomfortable coming out about these things because they feel shame for what has happened to them, even if it wasn't consensual.

Similar to the semi-colon tattoo for suicide survivors, sexual assault victims will get a Medusa tattoo. Medusa is known for warding off evil and protecting people. For victims, Medusa symbolizes strength and survival of what they have been through. It shows the endurance they have through the recovery of a tough situation. Recent TikTok videos have gone viral about getting a Medusa tattoo. With the power of social media, these videos are educating society about the reality of sexual assault.

While many resources and movements have been created for victims, there is always more progress to be made. "As a society I think we need to be more open minded about victims coming out about their experiences," senior Addison Stopher said. Sometimes when people share their experiences they are often downplayed. People are quick to make assumptions about the situation. Stopher thinks that this is the main problem when it comes to sexual assault. Victims feel that they aren't taken seriously so they don't even come out about it.

Many people's views are changing on the topic of sexual assault. It is becoming more common to believe victims instead of doubting or shaming them. There is a lot of aspiration for the future of these cases and how the way they are handled will get better. There is hope that someday all victims will have a way to share their story when ready to do so.

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Women experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

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14

Men experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

Work Hard Play Hard

by Brooklyn Sauer



Thorpe running in a cross country meet. Thorpe continuously works hard in cross country and track and has a leadership role among the team. "He's kind of become more of a leader, taking a leadership roles and just helping to guide some of the younger kids," Coach Nathan Lentz said. (Photo Credit: Kylie Huber)



Thorpe among his fellow Redzone leaders leading a slow clap. Thorpe has found that the students at Bullitt East have been very accepting and nice about the changes that come with his seizures. "People don't really poke fun at me about it but just, people being nice about it is pretty cool," Thorpe said. (Photo Credit: Cooper Bass)

Senior Gage Thorpe can often be spotted throughout the school. Whether he is running around for cross country and track, organizing events for SLAM, Beta or NIIS, or screaming at the top of his lungs in front of the Redzone Rowdies, Bullitt East's student body is no stranger to his face. However, another thing Thorpe deals with on the daily is seizures that, despite their unexpected nature, he still is able to work past to continue a normal teenage life.

Thorpe's seizures impact his day-to-day life in a variety of ways. For example, participating in the extracurriculars that he enjoys has to change due to the unexpected nature of his seizures. Through it all, Thorpe's senior year is turning out to be one of his favorites.

"I am always worried about what happens if I have one, like, right now? And what will happen if I do have one, how will that affect the people around me, like the students?" Questions like these often go through Thorpe's mind on a day-to-day basis. For instance, there are times

when Thorpe may unexpectedly have a seizure during a class change, causing the hallway to be closed down. "That's always the worst," Thorpe said. Though the official cause for the seizures are stress and anxiety, Thorpe's doctors still can't pinpoint exactly why they happen, hence the randomness. Most importantly, however, Thorpe hopes that people knows that he is okay while having a seizure. "I'm fine my body's not getting brain dead because of me having one...they don't need to worry about it, just kind of let it happen," Thorpe said.

From day to day, the severity of Thorpe's seizures can vary greatly.

"There are some days that are worse than others, that's pretty much with anything, but, like I could have one a day, like one seizure a day, or I could have multiple a day, and they're really draining," Thorpe said. Despite this, Thorpe still works to carry on with his day after having a seizure.

"I try to put on a fake face that, like, they're not draining, but I'm so tired afterwards, but you just kinda have to put on the face that everything's fine and you'll get through it," Thorpe said. Still, Thorpe finds a way to make light of the bad situation. "It is easier because I have to wear this headband, so I don't have to worry about my hair in the morning, that is a plus about all this," Thorpe said.



I just try not to let it affect me.

-Gage Thorpe

While Thorpe is still involved with many of the things that he enjoys, the way that he interacts with his extracurriculars changes due to his seizures. "I always have to be with someone that knows what

to do... like if I'm at a game there's like seven administrators all around me at all times," Thorpe said. However, he and his peers don't seem to mind the extra eyes. "The crowd at Redzone, they don't mind too much, they're really welcoming there," Thorpe said. Though it is a bit of an

adjustment for Thorpe from his previous years at Bullitt East, he nonetheless still enjoys his time in the Redzone.

As for cross country and track and field, he has naturally assumed a leadership role as a senior along with appreciating his ability to do the sport he loves. "Obviously, he's encountered a lot of challenges within the last year, but he's always been fairly mature, but I think he certainly has come to appreciate running, and sport, and being able to do those things maybe a lot more," cross country coach Nathan Lentz said. Thorpe has still participated in cross country races this season despite his seizures posing a physical hinderance.

With these involvements alongside his medical condition, it seems like Thorpe may always be on the go. "There's some days where I'm, like, going to that meeting, then going to work, then having to come back to school for Redzone," Thorpe said. While not the normal relaxing senior year many of his classmates are experiencing, Thorpe's last year is turning out to be one of his favorites. "Honestly

doing all of those clubs and athletics is a lot of fun so it's worth it, it's worth juggling," Thorpe said. Being involved in six different activities, not to mention having leadership roles in some, is a balancing act that Thorpe is still able to do on top of his other responsibilities and condition.



Thorpe cheering on the football team from in front of the Redzone. The nature of Thorpe's seizures are very unpredictable, which can lead to them happening anywhere, including in the Redzone. "I could be having fun in the redzone, and then one will happen, or I could be sitting in the office and one will happen so it's kinda random," Thorpe said. (Photo Credit: Cooper Bass)

Thorpe's experiences are certainly not what most people envision their senior year to look like, though he strives to not let them affect him. "I just try not to let it affect me because, if it affects me, then it just makes everything worse, I just try to live the normal life of a teenager despite having all these issues, because if I do let these issues worry me and take over then it'll be a lot harder," Thorpe said. Though Thorpe's life doesn't seem normal compared to the average highschool student, though he still has found ways to be a teenager despite them.

Though he was worried about people treating him differently at first, Thorpe has found the opposite to be true. "I

couldn't imagine a better school to have these issues with, the school's amazing," Thorpe said. Though the severity of his seizures have changed, Thorpe's social life has remained unaffected. "They're more inviting than last year, especially, but people are really nice to me about it, like they're awesome," Thorpe said. In general, Thorpe is just having fun with being so involved with the student body this year. "I am more involved than I was last year, the seizures do kinda affect it a little bit, but it's pretty fun. I'm having a lot of fun, just with all the people," Thorpe said. Thorpe's extracurricular involvement and perseverance are exemplary of an amazing, high achieving student within our school.