

Congregations Acting for Justice and Empowerment (CAJE) Updates:

On November 14, 2016, CAJE members came together to listen to concerns from people within the community on important problems facing our community. We narrowed the concerns down to three and from those three, we picked one to hone in on. That was reentry and recidivism of released convicts. Those interested in this issue formed a committee to investigate this problem. This is ongoing.

On April 24, everyone involved with CAJE will come together to hear what has been going on in the committees that have been formed and some are still working to get action on. We are brought up to date as to what is going on in each of the acting committees.

Then on May 8, we will all meet at the Nehemiah Action at the Old National Events Plaza to report to the public and those of the County or City of Evansville that is accountable for the issues that we of CAJE have taken on as important issues of our community.

For the Corpus Christ Council members, I would like to bring you up to date on the projects that we of CAJE are continuing with.

CAJE Research and Issue Campaign Updates:

Affordable Housing:

The Affordable Housing Issue Committee is focusing on the need for a process and criteria for projects seeking funding from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. On March 29, Kelley Coures from Department of Metropolitan Development met with CAJE's Affordable Housing Issue Committee about the various affordable housing projects around the community so we can have a better understanding of the kind of projects the affordable housing trust fund can help develop. We will also push for an increase in the amount of money placed in the trust fund.

Mental Health Commission:

In 2016, CAJE won commitments from Mayor Lloyd Winnecke and ECHO's Wyeth Hatfield to co-chair a Mental Health Commission whose purpose is to work to bring a mental health crisis care center to Evansville. The commission held its first meeting in March of last year and will meet again on March 23. In a recent meeting with Mayor Winnecke, CAJE indicated our continued concern that too many of our neighbors with mental disorders are landing in the county jail. We have asked the mayor and Mr. Hatfield to answer the question: "will you provide a business plan for the Crisis Care Center no later than October 1, 2017?"

Reentry and Recidivism:

The R&R committee has conducted over two dozen research visits.

Some of the agencies visited are Brothers Keepers, Churches Embracing Offenders, the Vanderburgh County Prosecutor's Office, Judge Trockman, Judge Niemeier and Aurora. We learned that Aurora has a successful reentry program with a 5% recidivism rate – this means that only 5% of those who successfully participate in the program committed another crime within three years of his or her release. The program has the funding and staff to oversee 25 ex-offenders at a time. Currently, only the state and the city of Evansville provide housing vouchers and there is just one case manager for those who are in the program. Aurora's reentry program has the potential to double the amount of

participants with the addition of just one more case manager. We also learned that Vanderburgh County has not allocated any funds for Community Corrections (programs for reentry and recidivism prevention).

Narcan for all First Responders:

You have probably heard that in the past, the Evansville Fire Department was reluctant to equip their vehicles with Narcan. In fact, in 2014, EFD Chief Connelly said, “No” to our request to equip his department with Narcan. The CAJE Narcan team was not dissuaded and continued their research and called many Indiana Fire Departments who are equipped with Narcan. After CAJE leaders shared some of this research with Mayor Winnecke at a recent meeting, he offered to make inquiries at the EFD.

We are happy to announce that the Mayor informed us that the Evansville Fire Department has changed their protocol to include the use of Narcan for overdose victims. The actual implementation is taking place this week! CAJE’s three year mission to equip the Evansville Fire Department with Narcan has paid off. The Narcan team will have updates at our April 24 rally.

Because CAJE persevered, because we didn’t take NO for an answer, first responders – Evansville Police Department, Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Department, Warrick County Sheriff’s Department, and soon the Evansville Fire Department – who had not been equipped with the overdose antidote, now will provide a citizen who suffers and opioid overdose a better chance of surviving and seeking the treatment they need. CAJE’s efforts continue in Posey County where the sheriff will not communicate about his plans for using Narcan. Posey County Sheriff Greg Oeth will be invited to the Action to answer questions about implementing Narcan. At the rally on April 24, 6:30 p.m. at Nazarene Baptist, you will hear all the details about the Narcan effort and participate in an exciting plan to communicate with the Posey County Sheriff.