

Lower to Hold Substance Abuse Symposium

VILLAS- Lower Township will host a substance abuse symposium, "A Community Approach to a Growing Problem," Sept. 23 at 6 p.m. at Township Hall, 2600 Bayshore Rd, Villas.

Michael DeLeon, who served 12 years in prison on drug charges, will present a video entitled "Steered Straight." DeLeon heads a not-for-profit organization that provides motivational presentations to youth and adults about the realities of making poor life choices.

We cannot scare kids into doing the right thing, we must steer them, he said. DeLeon focuses on codes of ethics versus the street code and enables children to switch codes from negative to positive.

The symposium will feature an update on the level of substance abuse in the township from County Prosecutor Robert Taylor and Lower Township Police Chief William Mastriana.

Lower Cape May Regional School District Superintendent Christopher Kobik will address substance abuse prevention in township schools.

Representatives from Cape Assist, Cape Counseling Services, Families Matter and Hope for the Future will discuss substance abuse prevention, counseling and treatment. They will be available to meet with the public at the conclusion of the meeting.

Counseling and treatment organizations will have resource information available in the meeting room.

Mayor Michael Beck said there is a substance abuse epidemic in New Jersey.

"This is our way to arm our residents with the knowledge of what exactly is going on, how to protect their children and what to do if the problem shows up within their family," he said.

"It is extremely important that people pay attention to this," continued Beck. "It's a lot easier to help to prevent a situation from coming into your home than it is to cure it once it's there."

Beck said he would particularly like to see fathers attend the symposium.

"Your kid needs a leader," he said. "It's time for parents to show leadership and attend the meeting and see what they can do to protect their child's future."