

Field Day Podcast Ep. 10 Marissa Mulligan.mp3

Jordan: Welcome to episode 10 of the field day podcast brought to you by the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. I'm your host Jordan Hoewischer, Director of Water Quality and Research for Ohio Farm Bureau. Today's conversation we kind of go off of the research on the water quality rails and talk about the opioid crisis with Marissa Mulligan from Ohio Farm Bureau and she talks about some of the events that they have planned for awareness around the crisis and really goes into detail about the speakers and things that are planned for her events coming up next month. Most of us know somebody that's been affected by this epidemic really and it is something that we know is a big deal but really needs to be highlighted and needs to be drilled down to say, OK what is the issue, how can we help, how can we get the youth of our state and the youth of our country involved in taking this crisis by the horns and steering in the right direction. Here is my talk with Marissa Mulligan from Ohio Farm Bureau, enjoy.

Jordan: All right so we'll get started. So first question that I ask everybody, who are you? Where are you from? How did you get here, all that good stuff?

Marissa: Yeah my name is Marissa Mulligan. I'm here because I'm the Policy Outreach Fellow for the Ohio Farm Bureau but I have a different background than many people that I've met. I'm actually from the city of Philadelphia, so I'm an Eagles fan and I just won the Super Bowl myself. I work in Canal Winchester at a sheep and goat farm with Katherine Harrison. I own my own duck flock so that's a lot of fun. I'm not from an Ag background like I said and when I went to Ohio State that's when I really started to cultivate my interest in agriculture and how I kind of got here. I was involved with the Farm Bureau through AgriPower and that's how I got to the Policy Outreach Fellowship that I'm currently in.

Jordan: I was also a member of AgriPower as well as some other people. Can you give me just a brief synopsis of what AgriPower is?

Marissa: It's a leadership program that Ohio Farm Bureau puts on. It really talks about different policy things, what Farm Bureau is all about, it really gets you involved with the legislation process and educate you on agricultural topics.

Jordan: Yes, which are skills obviously both of us have been able to translate over to a full time job. So you come from Philly to Ohio State to Farm Bureau. What's your main task here as the fellow for the policy outreach team?

Marissa: My main task right now is planning these Hope for Ohio events. It's a project that's focused around combating the opioid crisis through youth led prevention and really building strong communities. There are currently three events planned across the state. One of them is November 3rd at the FFA camp in Muskingum from 10-3p.m. The next one is November 10th at Spencerville High School in Allen and Van Wert County from Noon-3 p.m. The last one is November 17th at the Batavia Community Center in Clermont County and that one is from 11-2 p.m.

Jordan: Nice, so I know we've heard a lot about the opioid crisis and the things that are involved but just give us a little bit more information of how this has bubbled to the top of such a widespread issue not only in Ohio but around the country.

Marissa: So I've been around the state talking to people about the opioid crisis. I've been writing a lot of stuff about it to give overview to people and I think that the statistics alone are pretty overwhelming. So, drug overdose, accidental drug overdose is the number one cause of death in Ohio. It's surpassed car accidents. The national average for overdose deaths per 100,000 people ages 15 to 64 is 22.5. Ohio's average is 39.5. We rank third in the nation behind West Virginia and New Hampshire. In some of the southern counties where it's hit really hard those numbers can reach 66.1 and Brown County is 70.8. It's a huge issue. I think we were talking earlier about how the AIDS epidemic at its height, the opioid crisis has surpassed that. I have some actual numbers, 72,000 people died in 2017 due to accidental overdose. It's pretty overwhelming. I don't want to throw too many statistics but just talking to people it's hard to talk to someone that hasn't been directly impacted by this crisis. Even if they don't know someone directly, they are only one degree of separation away.

Jordan: I don't know if you know the answer directly, I know there's a lot of anecdotal reasons why, but why Ohio specifically? You know there's always been drugs in areas, there's always been, you know, drug awareness for years and years and years. But why is this issue specifically in Ohio do you have any idea?

Marissa: It's a super complex issue and I'm by no means an expert. I've talked to a lot of people but by no means an expert. I think a lot of it has to do with roadways. How many roadways go through Ohio. I think rural communities are hit the hardest because it does have such a draining effect on a community's economic development. The incarceration is costly to communities. The community resources to go out and administer Narcan for overdoses, the ambulances, the police officers, all those things are draining resources. Not to mention that those people aren't contributing to the communities. So I think there are a lot of reasons why Ohio is hit hard. I think conversations like this and God willing, the Hope for Ohio project and a lot of things that people are doing across the state will get us to a much better place.

Jordan: That makes sense. I mean I know that the reason for some of the crime or drugs and stuff is definitely the intersections of you know I don't know what the stats are. There's so many miles away from 60 percent of the country. That makes a lot of sense. But why Farm Bureau? Farm Bureau to a lot of people are going to be say, oh yeah it says it in its name, its farming. So why Farm Bureau? We know that we have that rural tie but what can Farm Bureau do to help move the needle on this issue?

Marissa: I think our members really came to us because there's not only that personal connection but there's also that business aspect. It's really hard for them to hire people that can pass drug tests. I have a friend that's literally facing this every day. She hauls manure and she can't have someone driving her trucks that can't pass a drug test. I think a lot of farmers are facing that issue. I think that's why they really came to us and said, you know, there's something that we need to do here. Farm Bureau is not a public health organization, we don't know about that, what we can do is work with our partners in 4-H and OSU Extension. We can work with our strong partnership with the FFA and we can help those kids. We've really fallen into the role of youth led prevention because I think that's where we can help the best as an organization and touch the people that we already have strong communication with.

Jordan: That leads us to the Hope for Ohio event. So walk me through if someone's listening in some of these areas, the October or the November 3rd one at the FFA camp

Muskingum, what are some of the topics or some of the speakers they're going to have at that event?

Marissa: That event is super exciting for me, it's the biggest one that we have. Before we start this, I just want to say that a huge goal like I said is to build strong communities. So when I started planning these regional events it was very important to me to have a community leader on the ground that kind of knew what that community needed. So each event as I talk about them is going to sound really different and that's because they're really tailored towards their communities.

Jordan: That's a good point.

Marissa: The one in Carroll County is a big one because Michele Specht is a huge driver of this project.

Jordan: Who is Michele?

Marissa: She's an OD, the Organizational Director in those areas Carroll, Tuscarawas, Jefferson and Harrison counties. She actually started the project and then OFBF took it on a state level and now we're going back to regional. So she started this whole thing and really brought it up to Farm Bureau that this is an issue that farmers in the area really want help with it. So that's a big one. We have a lot of people that are going to be at that event. One of them is Wayne Campbell. He's going to be speaking at the event and he's actually the father of a man who died of an accidental overdose. His son was in high school, I think he was just out of high school when he died and he was fighting addiction with prescription medicine that he was given after a sports injury. And then a lot of people in his locker room were using the same thing because they had issues. Typically how it goes is, they can't afford the prescription pills so they move to heroin and that's when people overdose.

Jordan: Not to interrupt too much, but I think that's one thing that some people have a hard time wrapping their head around. People hear overdoses and drug use and whatever negative connotation they have, but a lot of those people are some of these kids that you're going to be having other events where they had a sports injury, or they were in a car accident, or they had to have surgery on something and then it spiraled out of control, you know maybe people who would never have went down that path but had some sort of thing happen that accelerated it. So I think that's something to keep in mind as people get involved in this issue is that, you know, the negative connotation of the type of people that get wrapped up in this is really kind of harmful because you know they are our neighbors or brothers or sisters or whatever that had some sort of catalyst down this path that's been really dangerous for them.

Marissa: I've been really encouraging people to look at that Denial, Ohio campaign. It's really good. Everyone should look it up. They gave me a stat one day that 66 percent of people think that the opioid crisis is an issue. But only 19 percent of that actually think that it could be an issue for their family. So I think there's a huge disconnect between it being an issue and that issue will never come to my family which is just not true.

Jordan: Yeah.

Marissa: I definitely support people seeing Denial, Ohio. Another thing is how easy it is to get addicted. There are stats saying that there's a lot of genetic factors. Your weight, your

age, your family history. You can get addicted to opioids in as little as three days. It's overwhelming. That's not for everyone. There are a lot of factors like I said but that's a pretty overwhelming stat that it's so easy to get addicted.

Jordan: So back to you have Mr. Campbell speaking, what else is on the agenda for that one?

Marissa: Dave Kohout is speaking. I actually just got off the phone with him not that long ago. He's just going to give an inspirational thing to kids really encouraging them to be leaders and getting them really excited for the event. A little bit of background on the opioid crisis in case people don't know because people might not know about it still and we want to provide people background. And then, another huge participant in this event is Prevention Action Alliance. They're a nonprofit organization that is really focused on leading healthy communities in prevention of substance abuse and promoting mental health. They use science based methods to talk about prevention and to talk about youth led coalitions and the presentations that they're giving at every single event is going to be teaching kids about how to be change-agents in their communities and go and be leaders and, God willing, after all of these events we will touch enough kids that we're growing a generation of leaders that can stop this crisis for years to come.

Jordan: Because I know in my generation, one or two before yours, was the D.A.R.E prevention, the keep kids off drugs campaign. All of that was kind of integrated in schools. How do you get to the kids? I know this is a really hard question and maybe it's not one that you can answer but how do you get to those kids? Is it because it's drawing those parallels to somebody or you might have a family member or it could happen to you type thing?

Marissa: I've actually had a lot of conversations about people telling me the DARE program is just not effective anymore. It's not science based anymore. They're definitely moving away from that across the state of Ohio and really moving towards youth led coalitions where they're actually being leaders. There's a leadership opportunity, there's community around you. So there's definitely a conversation about the changing prevention conversation and methods to talk to children.

Jordan: Is there anything else on the on the November 3rd event that is worth noting?

Marissa: Yes. One man that I really want to talk about is Eric Fredrikson. He is an amazing man. I absolutely adore him. He was fighting a battle with addiction. He's been free from that addiction for nine years now. He has absolutely dedicated his life to helping others to give back to his community so that they can give back to theirs. He is a recovery coach. He speaks all the time. He's a life coach. He's so passionate about helping people that are in the throes of addiction and just talking to people about efficient ways to communicate. Calling someone an addict isn't an effective way to communicate with people. It just keeps the stigma rolling. So I think conversations about how we as people that might not be facing addiction can talk to people that are or know someone that is so it's not hurtful language. It's language that is promoting people getting healthy and that there won't be that stigma around them for the rest of their lives.

Jordan: I think that's what's good about the program is to have the real life scenario. I know you have a father of somebody who went through, you have somebody that has gone through it as opposed to you know, not to keep drawing parallels to the D.A.R.E

program but you know, we'd have a resource officer or a police officer come in and say, hey if you see a bad guy don't take drugs from him. That's not really the same as this. It's hey, this is something that can really touch you very quickly and kind of get out of control.

Marissa: I've never had an issue with opioids, but just talking to Eric and him telling me he had his friends around him dying all the time from this, it's very overwhelming. And quite honestly, that's not the only story that I've heard like that around the state and it's heartbreaking. I really hope that conversations like this and this project can really help move it forward where there isn't that stigma.

Jordan: That is a very packed schedule and that's great. I think people are going to want all of that. So November 10th you have 12 to 3 p.m at Spencerville High School. Tell me a little bit about that event.

Marissa: I have an amazing community partner that's working with me on that. Her name is Lori Romey. She's an FFA teacher at the Spencerville High School and when I had told her that I was doing this project she jumped on it immediately. Spencerville is one of the first ones that I had planned because she was so excited about it. She really wants to help her community up there. I know Lima has issues sometimes and that's in the Lima area. So that one is going to have Wayne Campbell again that's going to come in and speak to the children and tell his story to get that emotional piece so that they know this is something that's hard hitting. Prevention Action Alliance is going to come in and do the actual science based training and youth led coalition and provide a really good prevention method for the children.

Jordan: Then November 17th we have another three hour event from 11 to 2 p.m. Can you tell me a little about that?

Marissa: Yes, so that was really interesting. Again we'll have Prevention Action Alliance there as consistent thing across all the programs.

Jordan: That's in Batavia. I'm not sure if I've ever been there.

Marissa: Clermont County is cool, I like visiting but yes, Prevention Action Alliance will be there and then we're actually going to have a community panel where we have the sheriff, we have actually one of our Farm Bureau members, Becky Croppers going to be there on the panel, we're going to have a youth led coalition member that comes in and I think it's important to have a kid on the panel so that they can relate to other kids because if they're the leader of a youth led coalition there's a there's a reason, and they're a good leader in their community. So maybe the kids that come to the event can learn something from them and get a good takeaway. Again for that event, I have a really great community partner. Her name is Sara Eisen and she's been really helpful to get this event going and she's donating a lot of food. She's working on the ground really talking to people and she's actually in AgriPower so it all comes back together. That one should be a good one as well.

Jordan: So how can people sign up? If they need to look and see more information, how do people sign up for you to come to these events?

Marissa: I highly encourage everyone to register beforehand because you get a T-shirt and there will be free food at the event so it gives me a better idea how much food I'll

need. But if you look at our Facebook page all the events are on there. The OFBF web site has all the information that you'll need about the events.

Jordan: That's a Facebook page for Farm Bureau or for Hope for Ohio?

Marissa: For Farm Bureau. My name is Marissa Mulligan. You can always reach out on the Farm Bureau page if you want to get in contact with me if you have any questions.

Jordan: Awesome, is there anything else you'd like to add to this information?

Marissa: I would like to highlight a couple Farm Bureau members because it truly is inspiring to me when I go around the state and people share their stories and tell me everything that they're going through. We had a USDA roundtable here and a lot of the people that were speaking at that roundtable really inspired me and it was amazing to hear. Michele Specht, the Organizational Director, she does a lot up there and her community members Rita Lahmers and Jody Salvo. They work really hard on the ground talking to churches, talking to youth groups, talking to Big Brothers Big Sisters and getting those community partners together to build strong communities against this crisis. I think there are so many amazing things happening. Becky Cropper down in Brown County. She's so passionate about her community and making it better. Brown county is hit really hard by the crisis. She is doing so much in her counties to help those people and give them programming and actual science based things and connecting them with people, I can't even believe that she has the contacts to do all the stuff that she does. She's amazing. I just wanted to highlight those people because this crisis is a community issue. It truly is. And people in your community are working hard and I hope the Hope for Ohio project can give people resources to connect with people in their communities. I encourage everyone to go out and really look at your resources, support those resources and then hopefully we can get an end to this epidemic.

Jordan: Awesome I appreciate you visiting with us and giving us this information. We're obviously going to share this on social media so hopefully people will hear more about it and we can get a bunch of people at your events.

Marissa: Thanks.

Jordan: All right. Thank you. That was Marissa Mulligan from the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. For more information about Ohio Farm Bureau and other issues that we're involved with, please visit ofbf.org and again, please if you are within good distance of any of the events coming up for Hope for Ohio please encourage other people to attend. Bring your kids, bring your students, and bring people from your community to really help wrap our hands around this issue. Thank you.