

FRANKLIN

Substance abuse talk scheduled

Odd Fellows to host forum at Dean College

By Mike Gleason
Daily News Staff

FRANKLIN — The substance-abuse epidemic and its local effects will be the topic of a June public talk at Dean College.

The event — slated for 7 p.m. on June 20 at the campus center — is sponsored by the

Franklin Odd Fellows Lodge as part of a concerted effort to inform the public about the problem. It will feature several speakers, including state Rep. Jeffrey Roy, D-Franklin, and James Derick, president of the Support for Addicts and Families by Empowerment (SAFE) Coalition.

Roy said the talk will further the themes explored in previous SAFE events, but with the added support of the Odd Fellows.

"It's a continuing conversation — along the lines of

some of the other talks we've done," he said. "What I think the forum will be is a general discussion on how we got to where we are, some things we've done as a coalition and lessons learned along the way."

According to Roy, a recovering addict will be present to share his experiences, and there will likely be an update on the coalition's "drop in" treatment centers.

"The important thing to emphasize is saving lives through getting people into treatment," he said.

Odd Fellows Lodge Noble Grand Richard Gillespie and his wife, Tina (also an Odd Fellows member) said they were spurred to reach out to SAFE after one of their daughter's classmates died of an overdose.

"I was talking to my husband about how I wished we could do something about it," Tina said. The two reached out to Roy and SAFE through personal connections, she said.

Richard said the forum was being geared toward

local teens and their parents, though anyone could benefit from the information presented.

"We've already contacted all the schools in the area, and we're not limiting ourselves to Franklin," he said. "If the worst case occurs and we have too many people there, we'll just do another."

Richard said he was pleased the lodge had a chance to help combat a local problem.

"I'm happy about it — I think it's a great idea to get the lodge out in the community

a bit more," he said. "We're a community-based program, and we want to do things in the community."

Tina said there has been some enthusiasm about the talk already. She said a local print shop had donated the signs that will be used to advertise the event.

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