

## **BSHSA STUDENTS TAKING THE "OPIDEMIC" SERIOUSLY**

(Based on a Xavier Marketing and Communications Department story by Ryan Clark, staff writer – 1-14-20.)

BSHSA students **Michael Mercado** '20B from Chicago (left) and **Kendall King** '20B from Toledo are friends in the program, outside of the program, and in pursuit of a solution to the Opioid Crisis now dubbed the "Opidemic".

"Thirty years ago, when we were trying to fight the drug war, we just told people to say no. Now, this has become a health concern, because addiction is a disease. Education, awareness and safety are the ways to try and handle it properly," said Kendall. He is also a Xavier Community Engaged Fellow and is also a senator in Xavier's Student Government Association (SGA).

One of the activities of the SGA was to sponsor an event in conjunction with Xavier's Department of Criminal Justice to bring Hamilton County's coroner to campus,

Dr. Lakshmi Sammarco, who spoke at Xavier on Thursday evening, January 23, 2020 on the topic, "The Opidemic". Kendall feels that "it's not enough just to talk about the problem, but you have to have the right people talking about it, and that's what we're doing." BSHSA faculty member **Dr. Eileen Alexander** is advisor for Xavier's IHI Club (Institute for Healthcare Improvement) and she was instrumental in bringing Dr. Sammarco to campus.

Michael has "spent the last 18 months poring over data that illustrates the opioid crisis in in the region. ...And now I just hope we can make an impact," he says. The statistics are sobering. "Americans' addiction to prescription painkillers is becoming so pervasive that overdosing is now the leading cause of accidental death in the country. ...In 2016, more than 42,000 deaths were blamed on opioid overdoses alone, and by 2017, the US Department of Health and Human Services had declared a public health emergency," all according to the book DREAMLAND by journalist Sam Quinones.

"At Xavier, where students and faculty have a built-in sense of helping their communities, it seemed natural for them to wonder what could be done. Luckily for Michael, his professors were wondering the same thing. **Dr. Peter Mallow**, director of our MS-HECOR Program, was investigating the opioid crisis focusing on the greater Cincinnati region and how persons with addiction problems were being helped. The Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office has provided funding for this research. One of the ideas researched is quick response teams.

Research findings include "those suffering from addiction in Cincinnati have to wait longer to be treated than people in other parts of the country, and sometimes there isn't enough treatment for everyone who needs it." From Michael: "When I looked at all of these numbers, it just struck me—each of these numbers is a person who is struggling with opioid use disorder. ...It gives you a whole new appreciation for how important the opioid epidemic is to our region."

**ALUM-N-I-C-E** Our 1,693 Graduate MHSA Alumni, 178 Undergraduate BSHSA Alumni, and 21 MS-HECOR Alumni are the pride and joy of Xavier and our HSA Department. We applaud your achievements and commitment to the highest quests in health services administration.



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