



TANGIPAHOA PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

DANIEL H. EDWARDS, SHERIFF

OPERATION ANGEL – PRESS RELEASE



FEBRUARY 5, 2019

Press Release
For Immediate Release

HAMMOND, LA – At a press conference earlier this morning, several Tangipahoa Parish law enforcement agencies came together to announce a new effort to help combat the drug problem in our community with help for addicts.

Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Daniel Edwards and local law enforcement leaders were joined by Tangipahoa Parish officials to announce that they are bringing Operation Angel to Tangipahoa Parish. Participating authorities include the Ponchatoula Police Department, the Hammond Police Department, Tickfaw Police Department, Independence, Roseland, and Kentwood Police Departments, the 7th Ward Marshal's Office, Tangipahoa Parish 9-1-1, Tangipahoa Parish District Attorney Scott Perrilloux, and 21st Judicial District Chief Judge Robert Morrison.

Operation Angel is a program designed to help people with addictions ranging from cocaine to alcohol get help. Historically, law enforcement has addressed the problem of drug addiction by simply placing the addict in jail, feeding a stigma that keeps users from seeking help. Operation Angel follows in the footsteps of a program out of Gloucester, Massachusetts which was started in 2015, but it's the first of its kind in Louisiana.

"Throughout my life and career I have watched the devastation that occurs when individuals suffer from addiction. Addictions that ranged from cocaine to alcohol," Edwards said. The mission of this program is helping those suffering from addiction, those who are at their lowest, receive the help they need, instead of handcuffs. Criminalizing addiction doesn't help users recover. "There's nothing worse than wanting to quit drinking or stop using, and not being able to" Edwards states. Operation Angel is a drug rehabilitation program that's long overdue in Tangipahoa Parish.

"We stand here together encouraging those in need to seek help. You will not be charged with a crime, we will not ask where you got the drugs, however we will connect you with programs that will give you the help you need," Edwards continued. **It's also important to remember that Operation Angel is specifically designed for those who misuse drugs or alcohol and are seeking help in recovery. This is not a way for criminals to escape justice.** Anybody who's dealing drugs in this parish to our citizens, will not only be arrested, but prosecuted to the fullest. This program is also specifically and exclusively for those who voluntarily present walk into a law enforcement agency in Tangipahoa Parish and ask for help.

Starting today, we will begin a new way of dealing with those suffering from addiction. We will no longer treat addiction as a crime. We will now help to treat it as a disease. Addiction is a mental health disease, and it's important that we stop viewing it as a criminal behavior.

Those who suffer from a substance abuse disorder can walk into any substation or police department in Tangipahoa Parish and turn in whatever drugs or paraphernalia they may have without facing charges. They will receive free transportation to a treatment facility where they can recover, regain sobriety, and have a second chance at life, for NO CHARGE. Women who chose to participate in the program will be taken to the Lynhaven Retreat in Hammond and men will be taken to the Giving Hope Retreat Center in Lacombe. Both programs are run by the New Orleans Mission.

Voluntary participants may be drop off here 24- hours a day, says representatives from the New Orleans Mission of Operation Angel. The program helps those in the grip of substance abuse get help from what might seem an unlikely source: law enforcement.

"If only one person walks in to get help, it's worth it."

For more information regarding Operation Angel visit our website at www.tpsso.org. If you want help afterhours, please call 9-1-1 and they will connect you with the appropriate law enforcement agency. TPSO Contact info: (985) 345-6150 or (985) 748- 8147.