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Communities Start to Organize Against Heroin

Communities across the country are beginning to organize town hall meetings, support groups and campaigns to discourage the growing use of heroin, The *Christian Science Monitor* reports.

Heroin, once mainly seen in poor urban areas, is now increasingly used by young people in wealthy suburbs, small cities and rural towns, according to the newspaper.

"You would have to go pretty remote to find a place that didn't have this," Kathleen Kane-Willis of Roosevelt University in Chicago, who has tracked heroin use since 2004, told the newspaper. "It's just everywhere."

A study published last summer in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that as OxyContin abuse has decreased now that the painkiller has been reformulated to make it more difficult to misuse, many people have switched to heroin.

Parents say they are having a difficult time finding treatment for their children's heroin addiction. They are forming support groups to help one another. Some are turning to the Internet to find support from other parents.

Advocacy groups are trying to address heroin overdoses by pushing for state laws that give people limited immunity on drug possession charges if they seek medical help for someone suffering from an overdose. Most of these Good Samaritan laws protect people from prosecution if they have small quantities of drugs and seek medical aid after an overdose.

These laws are designed to limit immunity to drug possession, so that large supplies of narcotics would remain illegal. Advocates are also supporting rules that allow doctors to prescribe the overdose antidote naloxone to families of people addicted to opioids.