

# Jackson County COMBAT 2023 Community Impact



COMBAT begins with “community” as representatives from just a few of the various agencies receiving Community Backed Anti-crime Tax funding joined COMBAT staff and commissioners for a 30th anniversary presentation.

## 30+ Years Of Impact

Jackson County’s anti-crime program—among the first in the nation to not only provide increased resources for law enforcement but to also support innovative prevention and treatment initiatives—got a new name in 1993: COMBAT. The County Legislature passed a resolution in April of 2023 to commemorate three decades of COMBAT making a positive impact in the community.

The resolution declares, in part, “COMBAT has for 30 years shifted the paradigm of the so-called ‘War On Drugs,’ from doing more than just fighting drugs and crime, to also helping people.”

In 2023 COMBAT was projected to help more than 75,000 people through 93 grants totaling \$12.3 million for agencies providing prevention and treatment services. Additionally, COMBAT continued to be a vital source of funding—more than \$22 million—for local law enforcement and the courts.

“COMBAT-supported programs serve tens of thousands of men, women and children throughout Jackson County *each year*,” emphasized COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega, “and they have been for 30

years and counting.”

Contemplating the rates of violence and deadly fentanyl overdoses in Jackson County, Pastor Branden Mims of the Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ in Kansas City posed a thoughtful question: “Where would this community be *without* COMBAT?”

In his roles as executive director for Greater Impact and chief operating officer for the AdHoc Group Against Crime, Mims has been working in partnership with COMBAT for the last several years. Greater Impact serves as the Mid-Town hub for COMBAT’s Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN’) initiative.

“COMBAT is a vital artery for prevention and treatment, not just in Kansas City but throughout Jackson County,” Mims said. “Violence can happen anywhere; overdoses *are* happening in both urban and rural areas. So, I really do think that is a pertinent question: Where would this community be *without* COMBAT?” ■

[jacksoncountycombat.com](http://jacksoncountycombat.com)





## From The Director

“Where would this community be *without* COMBAT?” When that question was asked upon COMBAT reaching its 30th anniversary in 2023, I remembered being a police officer in Kansas City—before COMBAT. The crack epidemic overwhelmed us; we lacked the funding and manpower to make an impact.

COMBAT gave the police the resources to hire more investigators, but, just as importantly, more people who worked behind the scenes like lab chemists. Prior to COMBAT, the back log of cases was at least six months. While the police waited for the lab to process evidence, the dealers kept on selling drugs. COMBAT changed that. COMBAT also made it possible to shut down the meth houses in the 1990s.

Of course, COMBAT has always been about more than just increased law enforcement.

When I joined COMBAT’s staff in 2009, I gained a greater appreciation for funding prevention and treatment programs. It bears repeating: We can’t arrest our way out of these problems.

Jackson County was ahead of its time when it became the first community in the nation to adopt a tax dedicated to dealing with drug abuse and crime as both legal and public health issues. Thirty-plus years later, other communities across the nation are still trying to catch up. When COMBAT was invited to give a presentation about our Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN’) initiative (page 3) at the 2023 National Research Conference For The Prevention Of Firearm-Related Harms, I saw several PhD’s from all across America present their findings. Their studies revealed few surprises. Our first-hand experiences had taught us about the devastating consequences unresolved trauma has been having on so many lives.

While COMBAT has enabled Jackson County to respond with long-term initiatives like STRiVIN’, other communities are too often dependent on grants that expire just as an innovative program might start being effective.

COMBAT has for over 30 years been a steady resource to confront public safety and public health challenges in Jackson County. Today, fentanyl has become one of the deadliest drug threats ever, and gun violence is all too common. COMBAT is not a cure-all, but if we are to effectively respond to these crises, COMBAT is essential. I shudder to think where we’d be without COMBAT. ■



**COMBAT**  
Executive Director  
Vince Ortega



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## Staff

### COMBAT Administration

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Tammie Jordan

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Keron Hopkins

Budget Coordinator

Joe Loudon

Communications Coordinator

Shannon Bobo

Crime Analyst

Elle Larson

Office Administrator

Evelyn Owens-Taylor

Program Monitor



# Progress Being Made—Ahead of Schedule

COMBAT established three “Key Performance Indicator” goals when developing its five-year *Strategic Plan 2022-2027*. Considerable progress has already been made toward achieving those goals in just two years.

**Goal 1: Increase STRiVIN’ referrals by 20% year one, 35% year two and 50% by year three...**

In 2021 and 2022 combined, 623 referrals were submitted through the Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods social services referral program (page 5). Another 943 referrals were made in 2023 alone—a 51.4% jump in just one year.

The Strategic Plan also called for “increased participation” in the referral program by the Kansas City and Independence Police Departments. They combined for 283 referrals in 2023, up from only 11 in 2022—a 2,473% increase.

Referrals have increased in large part due to COMBAT expanding the STRiVIN’ initiative from four to

five neighborhoods, with the addition of Mid-Town Kansas City in the summer of 2022.

**Goal 2: Increase community engagement through increased user-friendly technology...**

COMBAT launched its new website in 2023 (below ▼).

**Goal 3: Facilitate greater collaboration among law enforcement agencies and Jackson County COMBAT-funded agencies...**

In addition to the referral program, COMBAT has also focused on collaboration through bringing law enforcement officials and program providers together at monthly STRiVIN’ meetings, as well as the 2023 COMBAT Impact Symposium (page 13). ■



## New Jackson County COMBAT Website Launched In 2023



[jacksoncountycombat.com](http://jacksoncountycombat.com) underwent a significant rebuild in 2023. COMBAT’s official website was not only redesigned but also reorganized, becoming essentially six sites in one with separate sections for Prevention, Treatment, Justice, STRiVIN’ and Funded Programs—all in addition to the main site.

Each section features its own unique menu options, although every page also includes a “HOME” link permitting a quick-return to the main site. The new Funded Programs directory incorporates maps pinpointing the more than 300 locations throughout Jackson County where COMBAT-supported program services are provided.

Launching a new website was a prominent objective of the five-year Strategic Plan COMBAT developed in early 2022, which called for increasing “community engagement through increased user-friendly technology.” ■



**STAY UPDATED: visit [jacksoncountycombat.com](http://jacksoncountycombat.com)**

**COMBAT—Making An Impact Takes “All Hands In”**

# STRiVIN' Making Life-Saving Difference

*Branden Mims serves as director of Greater Impact Kansas City, the hub agency for COMBAT's Midtown Kansas City STRiVIN' neighborhood. He's also senior minister for the Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ in Kansas City and the Chief Operating Officer for the AdHoc Group Against Crime.*

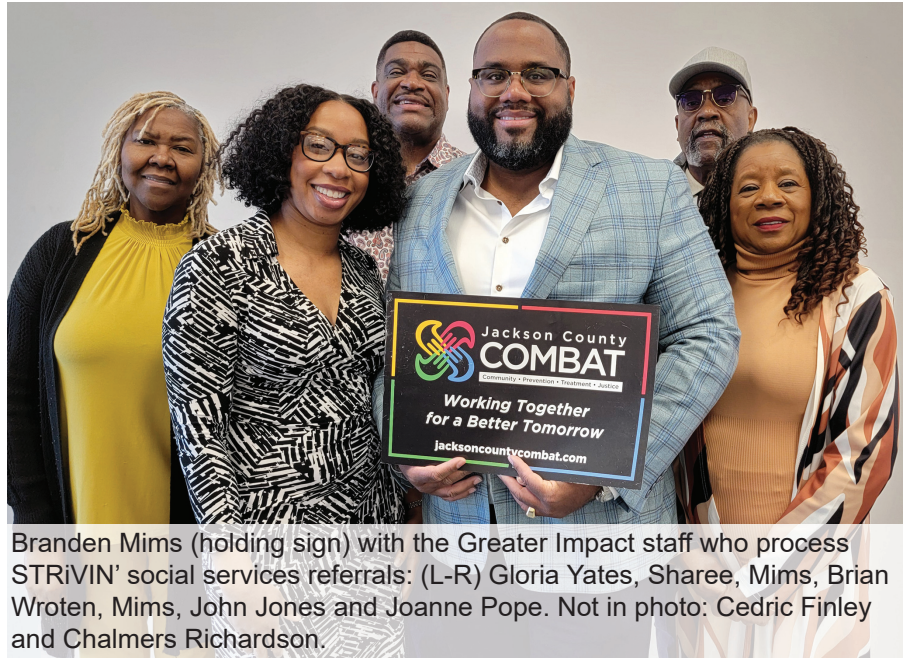
**By Branden Mims**

**W**e're changing so many lives and almost certainly also saving a few. And every life made better—or every death prevented—has a ripple effect. If you want to transform a troubled neighborhood—make it some place anyone could proudly call “home”—you must begin addressing the troubles that the people who live there are experiencing.

We are doing that through the social services referral program COMBAT created as part of its Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods initiative (page 5). That is why Greater Impact said “yes” in 2022 when COMBAT asked our organization to take the lead in developing a Midtown Kansas City STRiVIN' hub. We jumped at the opportunity. We knew COMBAT, through this program, could make a real difference.

COMBAT enables us to provide services to crime victims that most other communities simply can't. These other communities lack the resources. But COMBAT begot STRiVIN' in Jackson County, and it is through the referral process we are able to help victims heal and hopefully do more than just survive but actually start to thrive.

When the City of Kansas City launched Partners For Peace, the new violence prevention program quickly found itself relying heavily on the services Jackson County COMBAT established over 30-plus years—especially the STRiVIN' referral program. Currently, every single gunshot wound survivor and the surviving family members of homicide victims in Kansas City (within Jackson County) are referred to our Midtown STRiVIN' hub. Rather than weeks after the fact, we're being given their names and contact information within days, if not hours. That means we can frequently assist them in real time, which can be essential when a victim needs to be relocated for their safety. Early intervention can also prevent survivors, their families or friends from taking matters in their own hands through acts of



Branden Mims (holding sign) with the Greater Impact staff who process STRiVIN' social services referrals: (L-R) Gloria Yates, Sharee, Mims, Brian Wroten, Mims, John Jones and Joanne Pope. Not in photo: Cedric Finley and Chalmers Richardson.

relatatory violence.

Of course, we're also handling very practical matters like getting people the medical equipment they need in their homes to continue their recoveries or even arranging transportation to their next doctor's appointment.

I know in most other communities when police can't solve the crime, the victims are usually overlooked. Thanks to COMBAT and this referral program, we are able to extend a helping hand to our neighbors in Midtown and across Jackson County. While the referral program isn't just for crime victims, that has become our main focus here in Midtown. Of the 728 referrals made to our hub through mid-March 2024, 550 involved individuals or families needing services (screening, counseling, etc.) related trauma.

When we do our follow-up assessments on the phone or in person—we'll go knocking on doors, if necessary—about 80% of the people referred to us were unaware there is a whole slew of services available to assist them. Think about that for moment. Before COMBAT developed this program, these are people who might have felt all alone. Now they are being made aware that is clearly not the case. Just as importantly, this referral process has those who provide victim services collaborating more than ever before and asking how *we*—not just my organization alone—can better help people.

COMBAT sends the message that in Jackson County—in every neighborhood in *our* community—that we care, we can help, and we can all make a difference. ■





For police officers, school administrators, social workers and others making a referral for social services is a relatively simple process through COMBAT's Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN') initiative. They can complete the online referral form and press SUBMIT on their phone. It only takes a few minutes. Referrals are then routed to a STRiVIN' hub agency, which conducts the follow-up assessments. The hub agency can tap into the Community CareLink network of more than 1,000 service providers to connect individuals and families with the provider able to best assist them. The types of assistance available through the program are wide and varied, with trauma being the most commonly cited referral type (43.6%) in 2023. Because those needing assistance may have more than one area of need the percentages noted above exceed 100%.

COMBAT initially launched its STRiVIN' referral program to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the agencies that provide social services. During the program's first 18 months (July 2020-December 2022), police officers, school administrators and others submitted 676 referrals.

In 2023, alone, another 943 referrals were made.

"We quickly expanded the program to include the schools because they see a lot of families who are in need of assistance," said COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega. "Each referral represents a real person with real issues. Our program can get them real help, when previously they might never have gotten connected with the right resources.

"Our goal is to improve these individuals' and families' lives to prevent an escalation of circumstances that

could turn violent."

The program has enabled COMBAT to determine the types of assistance people need. In 2023, all non-fatal shooting survivors and the surviving family members of homicide victims were referred, so they could be offered treatment for trauma, as well as other services.

"Anecdotally, we know from our STRiVIN' meetings that trauma is at the core of much of the violence in our community," Ortega points out. "But we now have the data to support that conclusion. Compounding this trauma are people's economic hardships."

The online program allows police officers—or really anyone—to make a referral in a matter of minutes. STRiVIN' hub agencies do the follow-up assessments to determine which social services providers can best meet a person's or family's specific needs. ■

## National Recognition For STRiVIN'

COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega (far right) gave a presentation about STRiVIN' at the 2023 National Research Conference For The Prevention Of Firearm-Related Harms, held in Chicago last November. Ortega spoke during a session about "Supporting the front line through community healing: Advancing science on violence and intervention outreach and trauma exposure." ■



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/strivin](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/strivin)

Striving Together to Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods

# Project RISE Proving Effective Treating Unseen Wounds

**T**reating all the emotional and psychological harm a bullet inflicts can be a matter of life or death. A 2012-17 study tracking the long-term wellbeing of gunshot wound (GSW) survivors treated in Washington state revealed some startling outcomes: Compared to the general public, these survivors were 21 times more likely to be shot—again—and their survival too often proved short-lived as they were four times more likely to later be the victim of a firearm-related homicide.

Concerned these revictimization trends were likely not unique to the Pacific Northwest, COMBAT sought to take preventative steps in Jackson County, when it provided the funding for University Health/Truman Medical Center (TMC) to launch Project RISE in late 2019. RISE—the acronym stands for **R**esponsive **I**ndividualized **S**upport and **E**arly intervention—places an emphasis on screening shooting survivors for their risk of developing Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD). Project RISE's levels of treatment range from Psychological First Aid, designed to reduce distress in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, to ongoing counseling stressing Skills for Psychological Recover (SPR).

The Psychological First Aid is frequently provided to survivors in the emergency room at TMC, once they are physically stabilized. In 2022 and 2023 combined, Project RISE served 311 individuals.

“We try to track everyone we screen, though that is difficult with those who don't receive counseling or other ongoing services,” said Jamieson Edwards, a Project RISE Behavioral Interventionist. “So far, we've only had a couple of individuals involved with Project RISE who've been treated at TMC for a subsequent gunshot injury.”

COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega called the Project RISE results “encouraging so far.”

“We started this program four years ago because the study out of Washington was so shocking,” Ortega stated. “We didn't want people being shot again or recovering only to take matters into their own hands by retaliating, which leads to more violence, more people being hurt—even killed.”

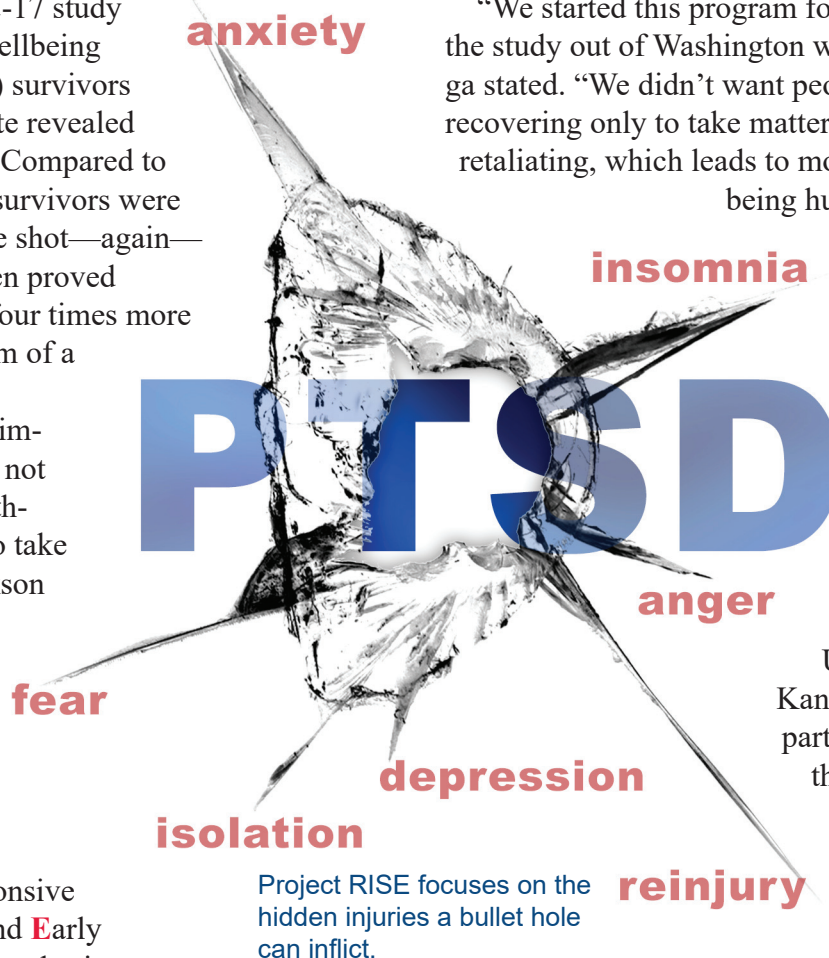
Project RISE has demonstrated the effectiveness of early intervention, concluded a study published in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* in November of 2023.

Dr. Joah Williams, Project RISE's program director with the University of Missouri—Kansas City (UMKC) Department of Psychology, was the study's lead author.

He and his colleagues advocated replicating Project RISE at other hospitals across the nation as a means of

providing crucial psychological care for shooting victims: “For each new person directly or indirectly affected by gun violence, the need for evidence informed, disseminable mental health services grows more imperative. Results from the present study suggest that early mental health interventions like SPR embedded in hospital-based programs may play an important role in addressing this pressing need.”

Dr. Williams stressed providing this mental health care in a hospital setting—early in a shooting victim's overall recovery—can also reduce the stigmatism they might feel from seeking it later elsewhere. He also cited other studies that showed “multiple barriers” often prevent GSW survivors from receiving mental health treatment in the weeks and months after being injured. They might not have treatment options available in



► CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/projectrise](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/projectrise)

Program Utilizes Techniques Developed Treating PTSD In Survivors Of Mass Disasters





The Jackson County Drug Task Force conducts wide-ranging investigations that the police departments in Eastern Jackson County lack the resources to do on their own. (L-R) Sugar Creek Police Chief Chris Soule, Lake Lotawana Police Chief Jamie McCain, Grain Valley Police Chief Ed Turner, Blue Springs Police Chief Bob Muenz, Jackson County Drug Task Force Officer-In-Charge Dan Cummings, Oak Grove Police Chief Mike Childs, Lone Jack Police Chief Tim Cosner, Jackson County Sheriff's Captain Terry Edwards, Grandview Police Chief Charles Iseman, Lee's Summit Police Chief Travis Forbes and Independence Police Chief Adam Dustman.

## County Task Force 'Making A Life-Saving Difference'

COMBAT Funds Large-Scale Investigations Individual Police Departments Could Not Conduct On Their Own

Since it conducts undercover investigations that often involve pursuing drug traffickers tied to international cartels, the Jackson County Drug Task Force being a relatively well-kept secret—even in Jackson County—is a good a thing.

"We don't publicize everything we do," stated the Task Force's Officer-In-Charge, Dan Cummings. "We can't, and we don't want to. Therefore, we aren't that well known to the public we're serving."

The Task Force receives its funding from COMBAT, but actually was formed years before the anti-crime tax was originally passed in 1989. Today, detectives from 12 Eastern Jackson County police departments and the Sheriff's Office are assigned to the Task Force.

"The Task Force really plays a crucial role in our prevention mission," COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega said. "In one recent case, alone, they seized 10.4 kilograms of fentanyl. Enough for literally millions of potential lethal doses was pre-

vented from being distributed in our community. The Task Force is making a life-saving difference."

Jackson County, with interstates running the length east-west and width north-south of the nation, places it at a precarious crossroads.

"The Task Force is a very valuable resource to the smaller (law enforcement) agencies in Jackson County that lack resources to handle large-scale drug cases," Lone Jack Police Chief Tim Cosner pointed out. "Many of these agencies sit on major highways or interstates that make them convenient locations to set up drug trafficking operations. Over the years the Jackson County Drug Task Force has assisted the Lone Jack Police Department with several situations where we lacked the resources to properly work a case."

Independence Police Chief Adam Dustman also credits the Task Force for evolving into an asset "in overall crime reduction, with an emphasis on both illegal narcotic investigations and the expanded focus on violent crime."

"These often long-term and resource-intensive investigations would put a strain on existing police department resources," said Dustman, "if not for the Task Force." ■



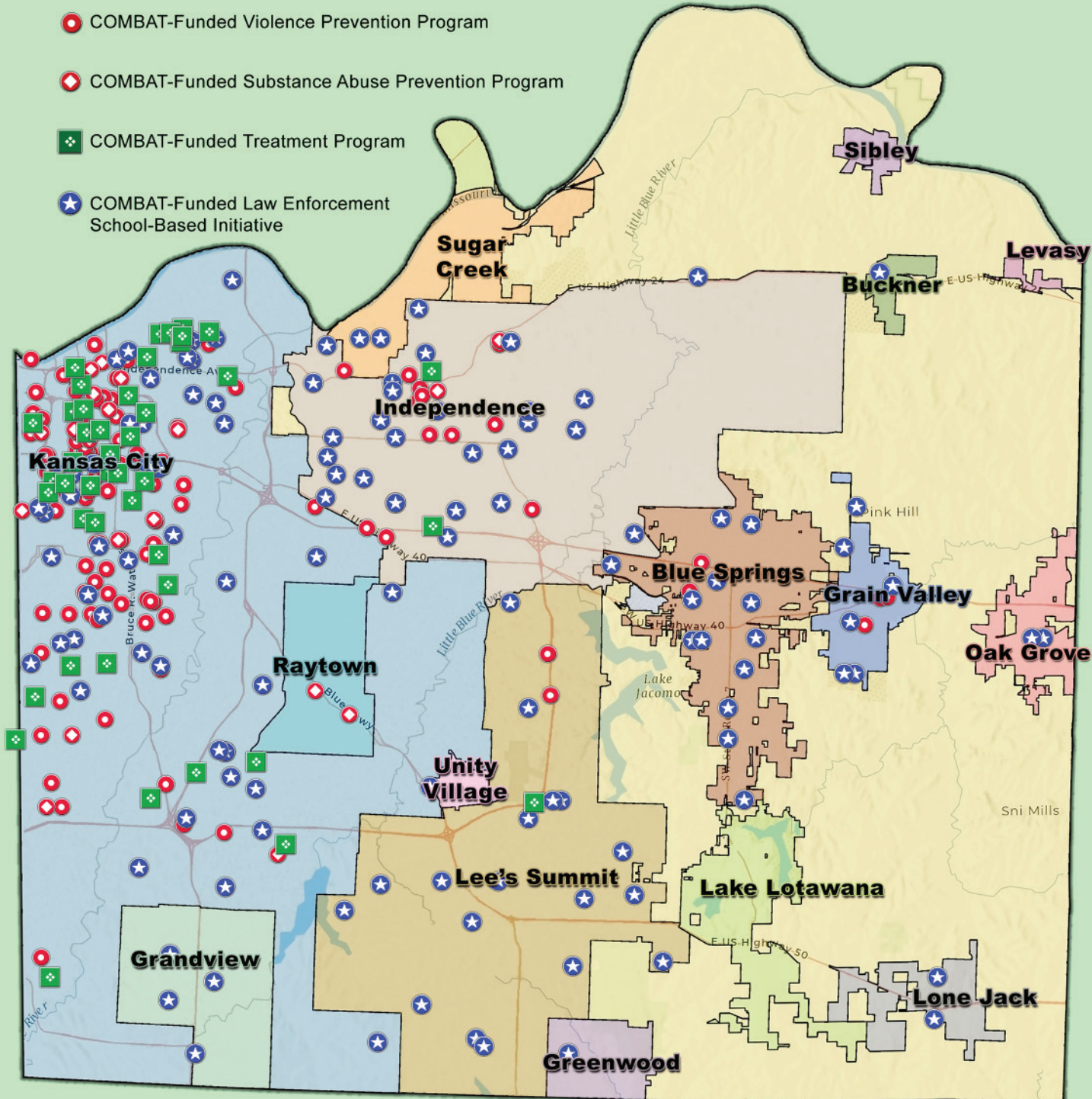
**AWARDS COLLECTION** – In 2023 the Jackson County Drug Task Force earned the Missouri Narcotics Officers Association's Law Enforcement Unit of the Year Award for the sixth time in 12 years. The Task Force was also received the U.S. Department of Justice's Outstanding Investigative Effort award for the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/taskforce](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/taskforce)

Task Force-Led Investigation Leads To More Charges In Case Related To Multiple Fentanyl Overdose Deaths





# 378

## Locations Throughout Jackson County

COMBAT literally begins with “community” and serves Jackson County as one community—from Kansas City and the suburbs to small towns and rural areas—with the goal of making it a safer, healthier community for everyone. In 2023, COMBAT funding supported 98 different programs that provided services at 378 locations across across the county—in every corner of Jackson County.



A Little Change Making A

# BIG Difference

## Essential Funding Source

COMBAT continues to be an essential source of funding for the courts and local law enforcement. Nearly two-thirds of the revenue—66.4%—generated from the sales tax in 2023 was budgeted for the courts, Drug Task Force, Jackson County Corrections Department or the Prosecutor's Office, and the Kansas City Police.

|                                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 16th Circuit Court                    | \$1,115,391         |
| Family Court                          | \$3,106,475         |
| Jackson County Corrections            | \$5,277,132         |
| County Drug Task Force                | \$3,342,311         |
| County Prosecutor's Office            | \$3,342,311         |
| Kansas City Police Dept.*             | \$3,342,311         |
| Jackson County Drug & Treatment Court | \$2,110,933         |
| COMBAT Administration                 | \$1,267,871         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                          | <b>\$22,904,735</b> |

\* This does not include what the KCPD receives under the Law Enforcement School-Based initiative.

The budget for COMBAT's administrative costs was just 3.9% in 2023.

**2023  
COMBAT  
Revenue**  
\$32,573,877

The quarter-cent **COM**munity **B**acked **Anti-crime T**ax (COMBAT) charges only 25 cents in sales tax for every \$100 spent. But all that change really adds up!

The tax supports life-changing—and oftentimes life-saving—services throughout all of Jackson County.

**Prevention Grants**  
\$5,517,320 (Pages 10-11)

**Law Enforcement  
School-Based Grants**  
\$1,210,367 (Page 12)

**Treatment Grants**  
\$3,906,300 (Page 11-12)

**STRiVIN' Grants**  
\$1,460,905 (Page 12)

**All agencies  
receiving COMBAT  
funding must provide  
services to Jackson  
County residents in  
Jackson County!**



**55**

Agencies Awarded Grants

**48,903**

People Being Served

**\$5,517,320**

**AdHoc Group Against Crime**

Crisis Support For Victims

\$200,000 • 310 People

**Amethyst Place**

Preventing Multi-Generational  
Substance Use

\$100,000 • 200 People

**Artists Helping the Homeless**

Be The Change

\$84,000 • 250 People

**ArtsTech**

Violence Prevention

\$200,000 • 600 People

**Blue Springs School District**

EJC Schools Collaborative

\$58,373 • 8,072 People

**Boys & Girls Clubs**

SMART MOVES

\$200,000 • 1,736 People

**Bridge Leadership Academy**

Bridge Youth Violence Prevention

\$170,000 • 75 People

**Calvary Community**

**Outreach Network**

HYPE

\$111,493 • 4,000 People

**Center for Conflict Resolution**

Transforming Reentry:

Going Home For Good

\$100,000 • 375 People

**Child Abuse Prevention**

**Association (CAPA)**

CAPA Prevention Services

\$52,438 • 80 People

**Child Protection Center, Inc.**

Child Protection Center Program

\$136,358 • 850 People

**Citizens of the World Kansas City**

Building A Trauma-Informed School

\$30,000 • 431 People

**Community Services League**

Wellness & Resiliency

\$150,000 • 400 People

**Delasalle Education Center**

Block37

\$200,000 • 220 People

**Eastern Jackson County**

**Youth Court**

EJC Youth Court Peer Diversion

\$101,000 • 275 People

**Emmanuel Family & Child**

**Development Center**

Youth 4 Change

\$120,000 • 125 People

**First Call**

Safe & Healthy Schools

\$32,573 • 300 People

**FosterAdopt Connect**

Community Connections

Youth Project (CCYP)

\$62,400 • 150 People

**Full Employment Council, Inc.**

Career Systems Of Support

\$150,000 • 75 People

**Girl Scouts**

Girl Scouts Outreach Program

\$10,000 • 800 People

**Guadalupe Centers Inc.**

Life Skills Prevention Program

\$78,057 • 180 People

**Healing House, Inc**

Non-Residential Aftercare Program

\$191,530 • 1,500 People

**(HAC) Boy Scouts of America**

Be Prepared Program

\$160,874 • 4,000 People

**High Aspirations**

High Aspirations Prevention

\$150,000 • 210 People

**Hope Faith Homeless**

**Assistance Campus**

\$120,000 • 3,000 People

**Hope House, Inc.**

Domestic Violence

Prevention Project

\$96,000 • 550 People

**Housing Authority of Kansas City**

HAKC PPFG 2023

\$51,547 • 58 Clients

**Independence Youth Court**

Peer Diversion

\$114,000 • 600 People

**Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council**

Safety & Resilience Initiative

\$60,000 • 1,000 People

**Jackson County CASA**

Family Drug Court

Advocacy Program

\$78,271 • 230 People

**Kansas City Friends**

**of Alvin Ailey**

AileyCamp & AileyCamp The Group

\$43,019 • 130 People

**Kansas City Metropolitan**

**Crime Commission**

Second Chance Program

\$67,056 • 50 People

**Kansas City Mothers**

**In Charge**

Survivors Will Heal

\$100,000 • 60 People

**Kansas City Municipal**

**Court Division**

Truancy Intervention Program

(KC TIP)

\$92,020 • 350 People

**Kansas City Youth Court**

Youth Court Prevention

\$72,653 • 150 People



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/fundedprograms](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/fundedprograms)

Program Descriptions, Contact Information & Location Maps



**Lee's Summit CARES**

Building A Safe and  
Caring Community  
\$80,000 • 1,605

**Legal Aid of Western Missouri**

Adopt-A-Neighborhood Project  
\$45,837 • 22 People

**Metropolitan Organization to  
Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA)**

Comprehensive Sexual Violence  
Prevention In Jackson County  
\$142,172 • 5,115 People

**MINDDRIVE, Inc.**

MINDDRIVE Collaborative Program  
\$70,000 • 250 People

**Morningstar Development  
Corporation**

Providing Support  
For Those In Need  
\$33,270 • 120 People

**Newhouse**

Newhouse Bilingual Hotline,  
Crisis Support & Victim Advocacy  
\$50,075 • 6,224 People

**Northeast Community Center**

Harmony Project KC  
\$21,000 • 300 People

**Operation Breakthrough**

Opportunity Internships  
For Ignition Labs  
\$80,000 • 235 People

**Reconciliation Services**

REVEAL  
\$35,000 • 1,800 People

**reStart, Inc.**

reStart Prevention  
\$184,225 • 300 People

**Rose Brooks Center**

Project SAFE  
\$50,000 • 400 People

**Saint Luke's Hospital (Crittenton)**

Saint Luke's Hospital Residential  
Substance Abuse Prevention  
\$87,818 • 100 People

**Sisters in Christ**

Dahomey Training Center  
\$168,559 • 50 People

**Synergy Services, Inc.**

BIP & Peaceful Path Diversion  
\$90,000 • 60 People

**Truman Medical Centers**

Project RISE  
\$250,000 • 150 People

**Twelfth Street Heritage  
Development Corporation**

Prison-To-Workforce  
\$200,000 • 50 People

**United Inner City Services  
(Early Start)**

Earlystart 2023 Prevention  
\$25,000 • 230 People

**Urban Ranger Corps**

Urban Rangers Corps Prevention  
\$40,000 • 100 People

**Whatsoever Community Center**

Whatsoever Youth Services  
\$45,000 • 100 People

**Youth Ambassadors, Inc.**

Youth Ambassadors  
\$75,702 • 300 People

**2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERS****Treatment Programs**

People served based on grant application projections

**20**

Agencies Awarded Grants

**5,439**

People Being Served

**\$3,906,300**

**Amethyst Place**

Preventing Multi-Generational  
Substance Use  
\$105,288 • 200 People

**Benilde Hall**

Substance Abuse  
Treatment Program  
\$400,000 • 500 People

**Children's Mercy's TIES Program**

Treatment for Infants Exposed to  
Substance Abuse  
\$65,000 • 250 People

**Comprehensive Mental  
Health Services**

CMH Services SUD Treatment  
\$200,000 • 200 People

**Cornerstones of Care**

SUD Treatment  
\$246,000 • 215 People

**First Call**

Recovery Support Navigation  
\$78,443 • 125 People

**Footprints, Inc.**

Footprints Treatment Program  
\$300,000 • 600 People

**Guadalupe Centers**

Outpatient Treatment Program  
\$115,774 • 80 People

**Healing House, Inc.**

Transitional Living  
\$350,000 • 585 People

**Heartland Center  
for Behavioral Change**

SUD Treatment  
\$350,000 • 200 People

**Mattie Rhodes Center**

Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn) Treat-  
ment Program  
\$121,000 • 120 People

**Plaza Academy**

Treatment For At-Risk Adolescents  
\$25,000 • 100 People

**ReDiscover**

Substance Use Disorder Treatment  
\$400,000 • 1,054 People

**Rose Brooks Center**

Supported Recovery Program  
\$90,995 • 30 People

**Saint Luke's Hospital (Crittenton)**

Adolescent Treatment Program  
\$94,300 • 30 People

**Sheffield Place**  
Sheffield Treatment  
For Homeless Mothers  
\$102,000 • 150 People

**Sisters In Christ**  
Recovery Housing  
\$300,000 • 50 People

**Swope Health Services**  
Imani House  
\$142,500 • 400 People

**University Health –  
Truman Medical Centers**  
Recovery Health Services  
\$120,000 • 50 People

**Welcome House Inc.**  
Sober Living Recovery Program  
\$300,000 • 500 People

## 2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Students served based on grant application projections

## Law Enforcement School-Based Initiatives



**10**

Agencies Awarded Grants

**21,255**

Students Being Served

**\$1,210,367**

**Blue Springs Police Dept.**  
\$225,000 • 975 Students

**Buckner Police Dept.**  
\$80,000 • 331 Students

**Grain Valley Police Dept.**  
\$85,867 • 700 Students

**Grandview Police Dept.**  
\$4,500 • 300 Students

**Independence Police Dept.**  
\$225,000 • 8,650 Students

**Jackson County Sheriff**  
\$150,000 • 660 Students

**Kansas City Police Dept.**  
\$225,000 • 6,400 Students

**Lee's Summit Police Dept.**  
\$225,000 • 2,989 Students

**Lone Jack Police Dept.**  
\$65,000 • 112 Students

**Oak Grove Police Dept.**  
\$75,000 • 310 Students

**Sugar Creek Police Dept.**  
\$75,000 • 488 Students

## 2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Students served based on grant application projections

## STRiVIN' Initiative Agencies

**STRiVIN'**  
Striving Together to Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods

**8**

Agencies Awarded Grants

**\$1,460,905**

**Bridge Leadership Academy  
(Hickman Mills)**  
\$170,000

**Center for Conflict Resolution**  
\$126,854

**Community Services League**  
\$225,000

**Hope House**  
\$136,245

**Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council**  
\$312,616

**Kansas City Metropolitan  
Crime Commission**  
\$96,300

**Mattie Rhodes Center**  
\$193,890

**Sisters In Christ**  
\$200,000





Jackson County Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker welcomes the more than 150 people who attended the symposium.

# 2023 COMBAT SYMPOSIUM

## Making A Greater IMPACT Together

Jackson County was ahead of the rest of the United States when it came to addressing drug abuse and crime in the early 1990s. Most of the nation escalated the “War On Drugs” in a futile attempt to arrest away these problems. Jackson County did more, creating COMBAT to deal with these life and death issues as both legal *and* public health crises.

At the 2023 COMBAT Impact Symposium, held in June, the focus was again on trying to get ahead of two deadly trends confronting our county and the entire country in the 21st Century: gun violence and fentanyl overdoses. More than 150 people attended the day-long event. They represented the various agencies receiving COMBAT prevention and treatment funding, as well as

But there was also an emphasis on trying to address the underlying issues that can spark violence, such as trauma going untreated and social media frequently instigating shootings and other violence.

Other group discussions during the symposium centered around sounding the alarm about fentanyl (pages 14 & 15). COMBAT asked what “messaging” might best reach adults and youths to raise their awareness about this threat. A graphic image showing a lethal speck of fentanyl on a coin inspired this hashtag: “#APennyForYourLife.”

Other taglines warned “Do you trust your dealer with your life?” and “Are you willing to bet your life?”

With fentanyl being fatal in a nearly microscopic

**“Together, we are going to write the next chapter of COMBAT’s history. We want it to be a story not of war being waged in our community but of doing more to make this a more peaceful community.”** — COMBAT Symposium History Presentation

local police departments and the Sheriff’s Office.

The gathering also served as a de facto county-wide Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN’) meeting. COMBAT launched STRiVIN’, in part, to bring together individuals with different expertise (education, law enforcement, social work, health care, etc.) and experiences to seek solutions to problems. At the symposium, COMBAT staff challenged attendees to focus on what more can be done—“that is in our control”—to reduce gun violence in the community. This “in-our-control” caveat excluded calls for new state or federal firearms legislation.

Suggestions included giving away free gun locks as part of a safety campaign about properly storing firearms and possibly developing gun buy-back programs.

2 milligram dose—“your first time could be your last time”—the conversation quickly shifted to programs trying to convince people taking any pills given to them by someone other than their doctor might be unsafe: “Make them better aware of the danger of taking prescription medications not prescribed for them, especially if this ‘medication’ was obtained from someone else who might be passing along fake pills. ‘Your friend is not your pharmacist.’”

“Our community partners and staff are often focused on day-to-day operations,” COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega said. “It’s good for us to have days like this to concentrate on the big picture issues like gun violence and fentanyl. As we move forward, we’ll be holding more events like this more often.” ■



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/symposium](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/symposium)

Download Presentations Given During The Symposium About COMBAT History, STRiVIN’, Gun Violence & Fentanyl

# A Tragic Combination

**W**hen little hands can get hold of counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl, the outcome can be tragic. During the last five years in Jackson County, fentanyl-related overdoses have claimed the lives of nine children under 3 years old. ■

—Fentanyl: A Medical Examiner's Perspective—

» Page 15

## Sounding The Alarm About Fentanyl

### 'If You Can See It, It Can Kill You'

**T**ragically, the death toll from fentanyl overdoses continues to climb in Jackson County and across the United States. For the last several years, COMBAT has joined efforts to sound the alarm about the deadly risks associated with the synthetic opioid.

Drug dealers often lace cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin with fentanyl. They also routinely mix it into the counterfeit pills they manufacture, then sell as Xanax or OxyContin.

"People take these fake pills thinking their 'safe' because they're supposed to be a prescription medication," said Dan Cummings, the Jackson County Drug Task Force's Officer-In-Charge (page 7). "Instead, they are being given what could essentially be a poison pill containing a lethal dose of fentanyl."

"But the dealers have also created a *demand* for fentanyl. Not everyone overdosing on fentanyl is unknowingly taking fentanyl. Their substance use disorder has worsened to the point they've become dependent on fentanyl's potency."

In the last three years (2021-23), the Jackson County Drug Task Force has confiscated more than 75,000 counterfeit pills and 22,000 grams of fentanyl powder. That is enough powder to produce 11 million—11,000,000!—lethal doses of fentanyl.

Fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin, and that potency can make just two milligrams—0.002 grams—of fentanyl a lethal dose. Dr. Kelvin Walls, the COMBAT Commission's Public Health Care Professional member, once described how a tiny speck of fentanyl can be fatal: "If you can see it, it can kill you."

After six in 10 laced pills the Drug Enforcement Agency tested in 2022 contained enough fentanyl to kill, the DEA issued a public safety alert: "Fentanyl remains the deadliest drug threat facing this country."

These are just a few of the grim fentanyl facts included on the COMBAT prevention website and in a COMBAT-produced brochure that Cummings has taken charge of distributing at various community events. "The Task Force's work obviously includes undercover work," Cummings said, "but when it comes to fentanyl, I want to be out front trying to warn everyone." ■



**FENTANYL**  
**GET THE FACTS**

When a tiny speck is enough to **KILL** there's no drug dealer you can trust with your life

**Jackson County COMBAT**  
Community • Prevention • Treatment • Justice

The poster features a black background with a red heartbeat line and a skull and crossbones icon. It shows a close-up of a hand holding a small white pill over a US penny. The penny has a speck of white powder on it, and the word 'TRUST' is visible above the Lincoln profile. The year '2009' is at the bottom of the penny.



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/fentanylfacts](https://jacksoncountycombat.com/fentanylfacts)

Get The Facts. Spread The Word. Warn Those You Know & Love.



# Fentanyl: A Medical Examiner's Perspective

*This is excerpt of an article written by Jackson County Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Lindsey Haldiman and posted on [jacksoncountycombat.com](http://jacksoncountycombat.com) as part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness about the deadly threat fentanyl poses.*

**By Lindsey Haldiman**

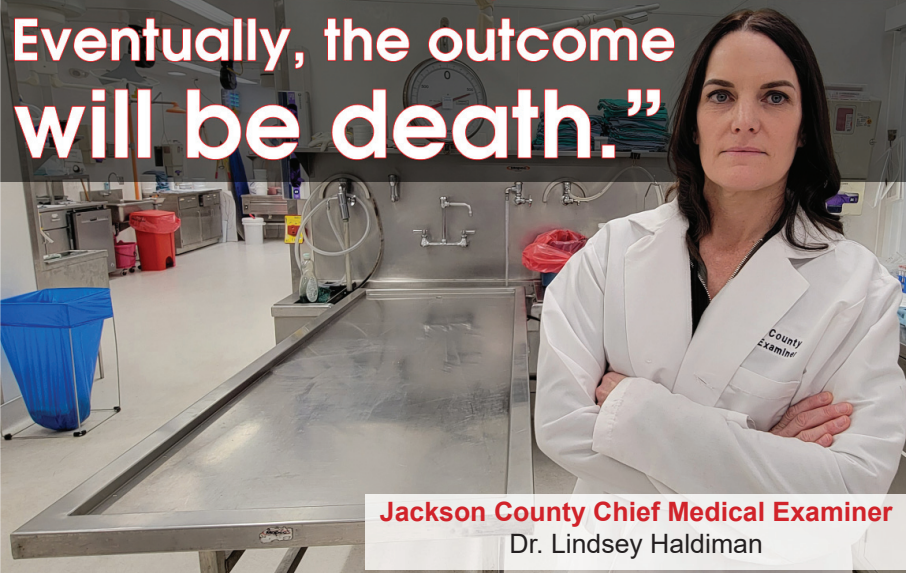
**F**rom 2018 to 2022, the Jackson County Medical Examiner's Office saw more than a 700% increase in deaths due to fentanyl, from 23 deaths in 2018 (an average of one every 16 days), to 189 in 2022 (an average of one every other day). And all these deaths were completely preventable.

Fentanyl does not discriminate. I've seen deaths from fentanyl in individuals 10 months of age to 73 years old.

I'll spare you the details about the chemical properties of fentanyl. What's most important to know about fentanyl is that it's killing people—people of all ages, races and genders. Fentanyl is extremely potent. Fifty times more potent than heroin! That potency makes it highly addictive, but also potentially lethal in one single use.

Yes, it is a medication—administered in microscopic doses under carefully controlled conditions—that can alleviate severe pain. But this synthetic opioid is now being commonly mixed with other drugs and to also

**“Taking these pills or other drugs laced with fentanyl is like playing Russian Roulette. Eventually, the outcome**



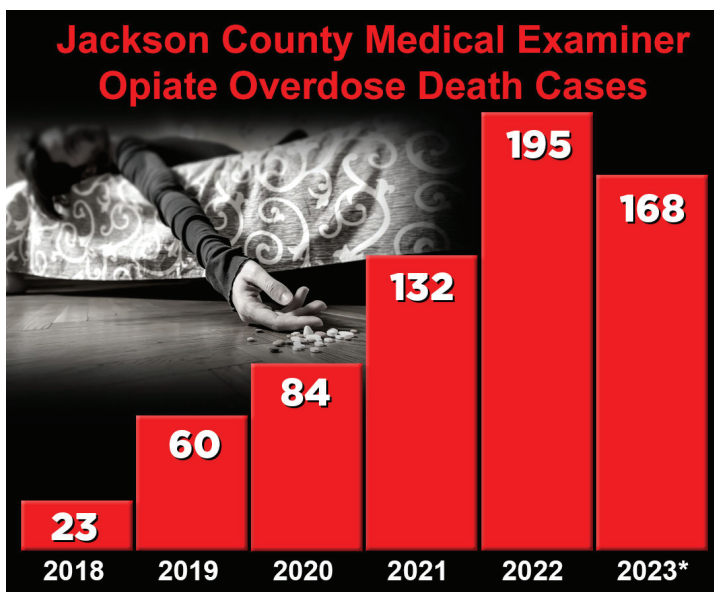
manufacture counterfeit prescription drugs. Illicit drug manufacturers are not interested in quality control. Some of the drugs and fake pills they sell will contain larger amounts of fentanyl than others. Which pill will contain a fatal amount? Taking these pills or other drugs laced with fentanyl is like playing Russian Roulette. Eventually, the outcome will be death.

Most of the fentanyl deaths I see in our office are individuals less than 40 years of age. They'll often be found in their homes in bed with a large amount of dried foam around the mouth and nose. Drug paraphernalia may be next to them, an indication they'd used the drug and laid down—never to rise again.

Fentanyl overdose victims slowly suffocate from the edema fluid building up in their lungs secondary to the respiratory depression caused by fentanyl. Their lives are literally drowned out. Their bodies are zipped up in body bags and transported to the Medical Examiner's Office, where they are placed on a metal slab, undressed, photographed and autopsied.

Grieving family members must face the reality that they will never see their deceased loved one again.

I don't want to continue seeing so many of these deaths—too many lives becoming a statistic, ending due to the awful misuse of this drug. Even for a medical examiner, it is difficult to cope knowing each and every one of these deaths was preventable. None of these lives needed to end this way. ■



\*Through November 20, 2023



**LEARN MORE:** visit [jacksoncountycombat.com/meperspective](http://jacksoncountycombat.com/meperspective)

Read Full Article On COMBAT's Website

## Free Conflict Resolution Training

COMBAT hosted a Conflict Resolution Training session and Resource Fair that more than 120 people attended in October. The Center for Conflict Resolution conducted the training; 11 other agencies receiving COMBAT funding participated in the fair. The event was held at the Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ, site of the COMBAT STRiVIN' hub in Mid-Town Kansas City. ■



### ◀ PROJECT RISE: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

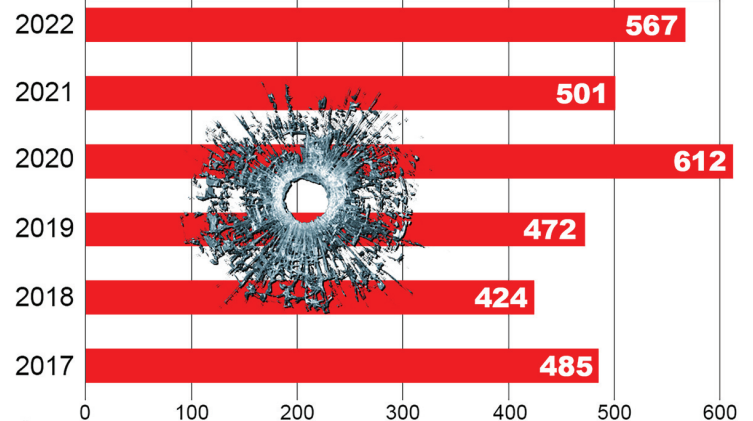
their neighborhood and lack adequate transportation. Economic hardships could also make such care unaffordable. While Project RISE doesn't charge for services, financial struggles can often impede their clients' recovery. To help clients needing income, employment, food, housing and other economic assistance, Project RISE staff have made 98 STRiVIN' referrals (page 5) from 2021 through March 12, 2024.

"We work with a lot of people who are disadvantaged in a lot of ways," Edwards noted. "STRiVIN' has been invaluable in getting them the kind of economic assistance we don't provided. That's been crucial to their overall health.

"As we all now, it's difficult to focus on your long-term wellbeing if you are having trouble meeting your basic short-terms needs like paying the rent." ■

## Jackson County 2017-2022

### Non-Fatal Bullet-To-Skin Shootings



Over this six-year period, there were 3,061 non-fatal shootings in Jackson County in which a person was struck—a.k.a. a "bullet-to-skin" injury.



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