

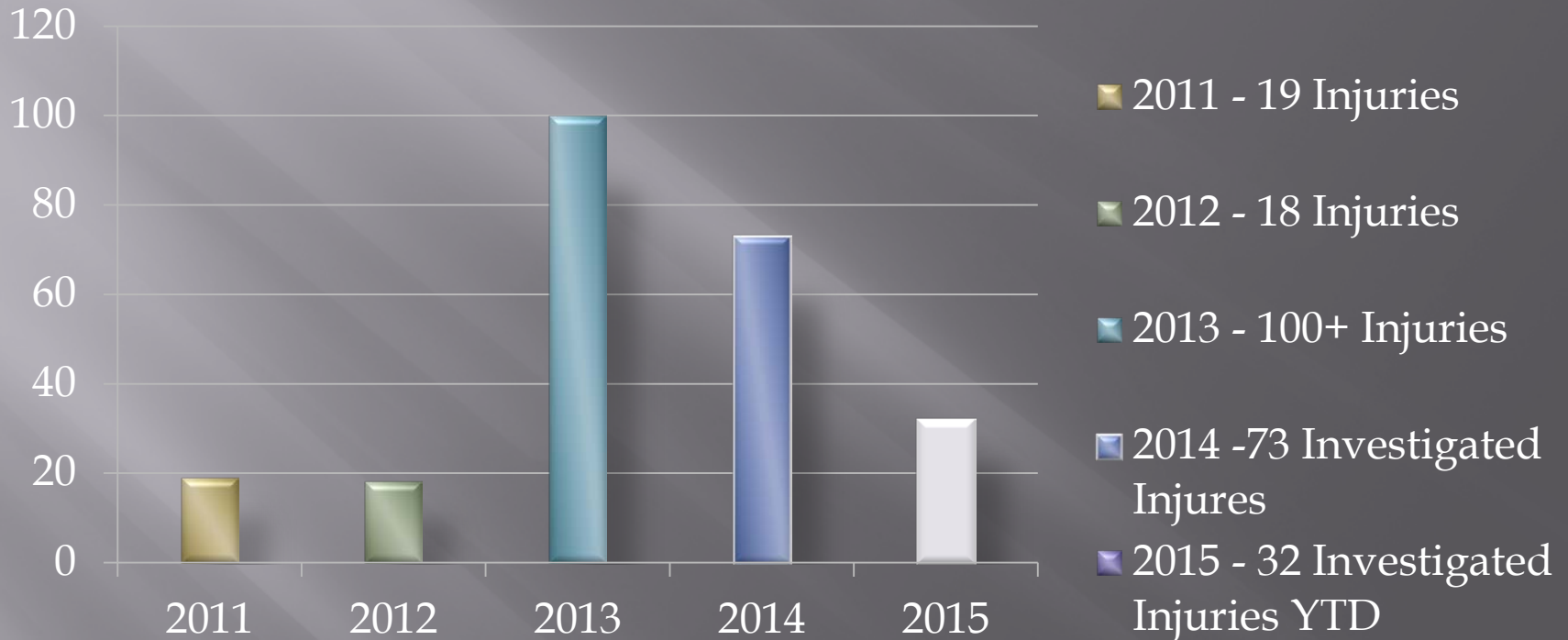
# NORTHWEST VA REGIONAL DRUG AND GANG TASK FORCE



# DRUG TASK FORCE BACKGROUND

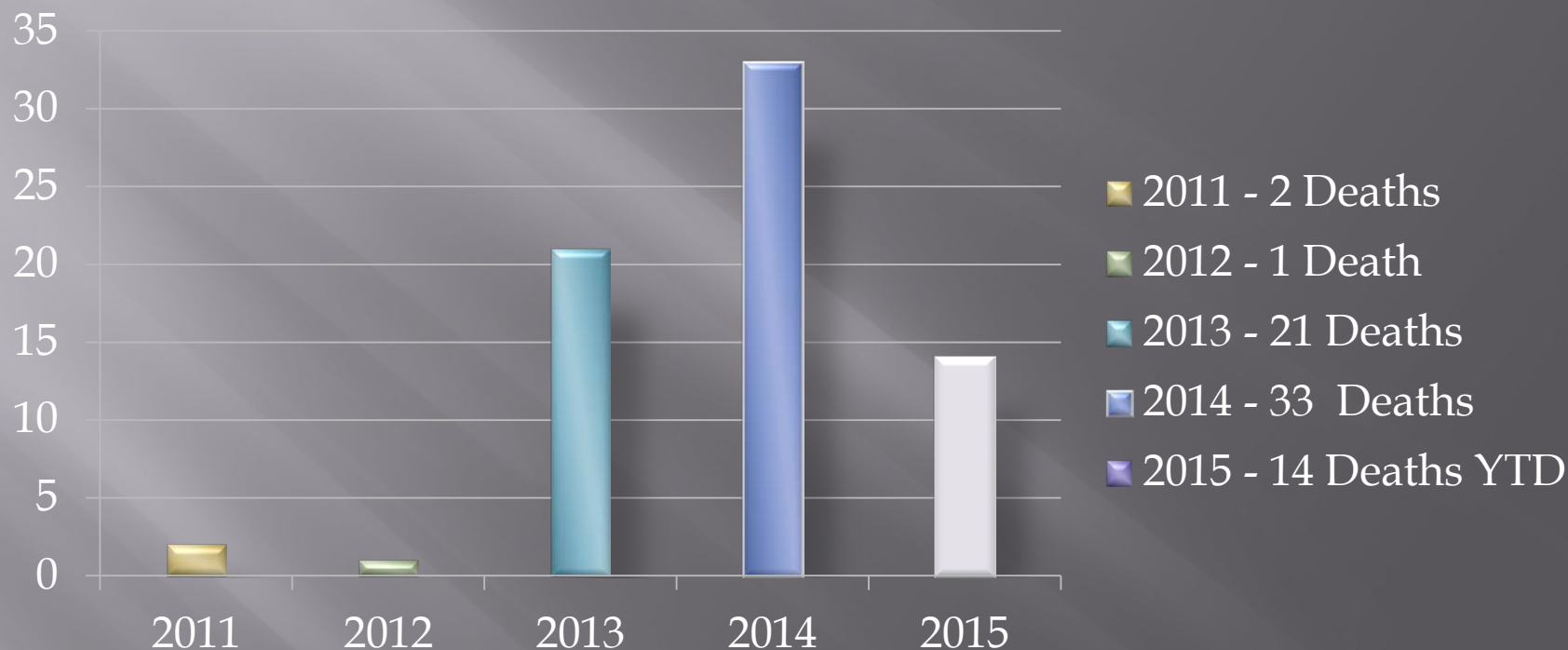
- Organized in 1986 with 8 Task Force Officers and Special Agents
- Currently comprised of 26 Task Force Officers and Special Agents
  - Support staff is one Coordinator and one Administrative Assistant
- Managed by a Command Board consisting of 9 law enforcement agencies:
  - Clarke, Shenandoah, Page, Frederick, and Warren County Sheriff's Offices, the City of Winchester, the Towns of Front Royal and Strasburg Police Departments, and the Virginia State Police
- Partnership with Federal agencies including:
  - BATF, DEA, FBI, ICE, and DHS
- Task force operations are funded quarterly by each jurisdiction

# Opiate Overdose Injuries By Year



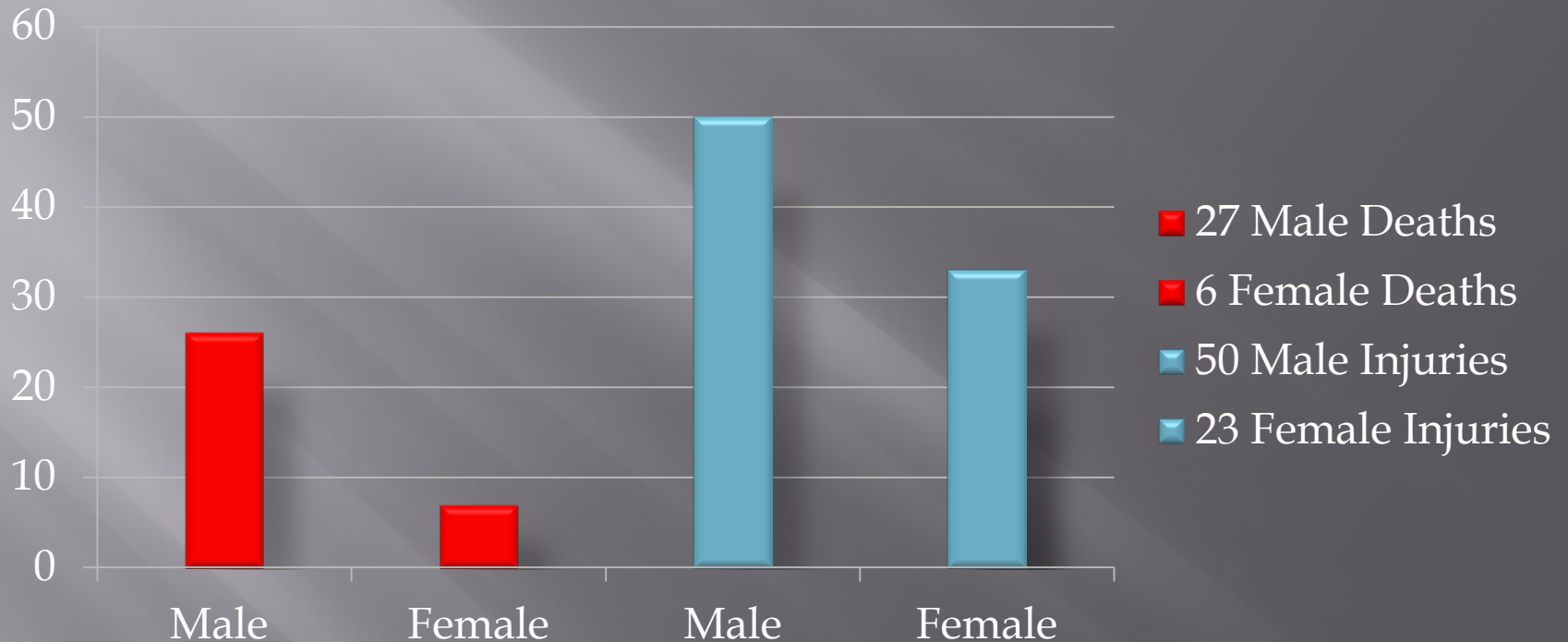
- \* These numbers are approximate due to the reporting agencies policy on reporting to Law Enforcement.
- The majority of Heroin overdoses have occurred in Winchester and Frederick County.

# Opiate Overdose Deaths By Year



\* Without the use of Naloxone (A drug used to immediately counteract the effects of Opiates) the death toll would be much higher.

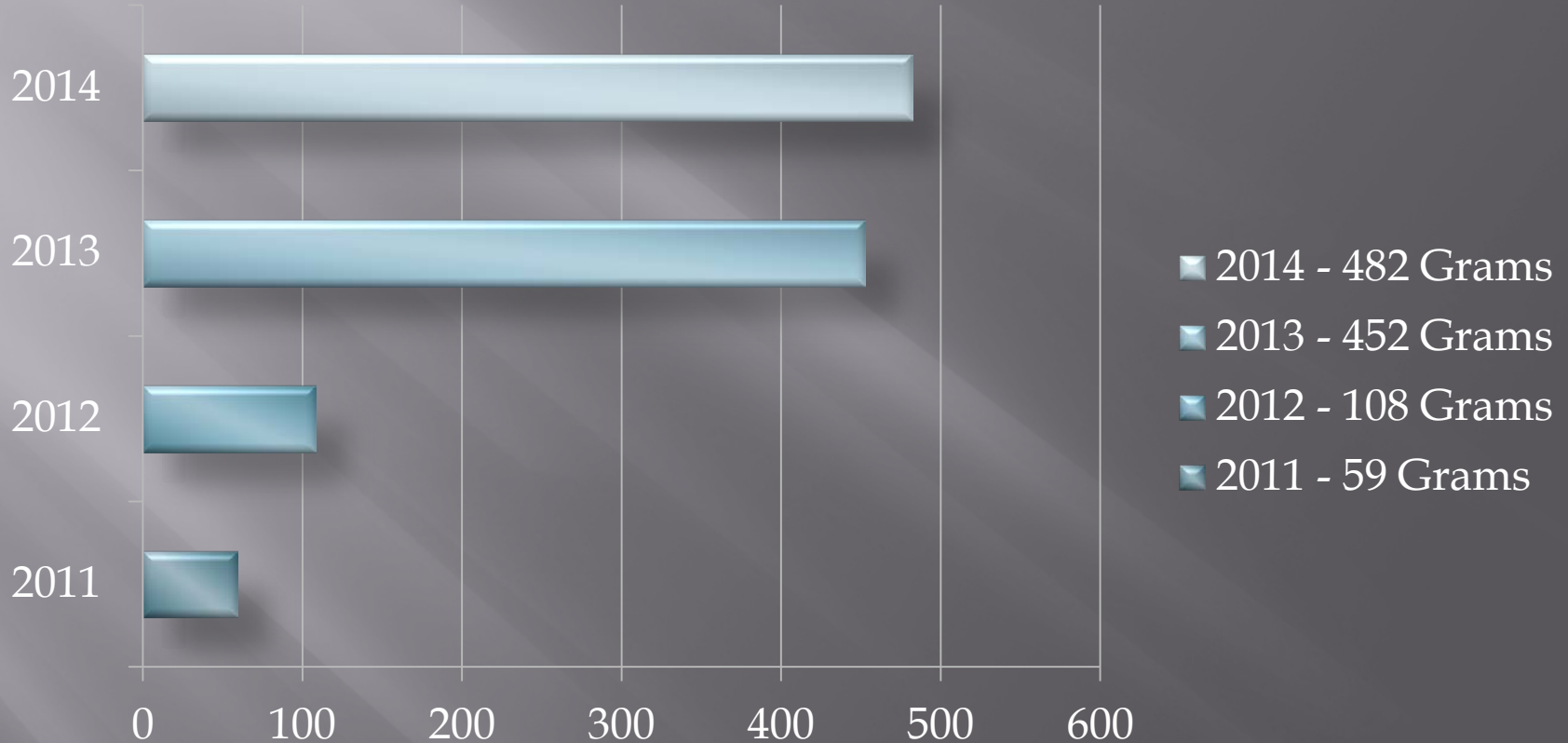
Males are 4.5 times more likely to die from an overdose  
Males are 2.17 times more likely to overdose  
Average age of overdose 30.5



**2014 Overdose Data From Task Force AOR**

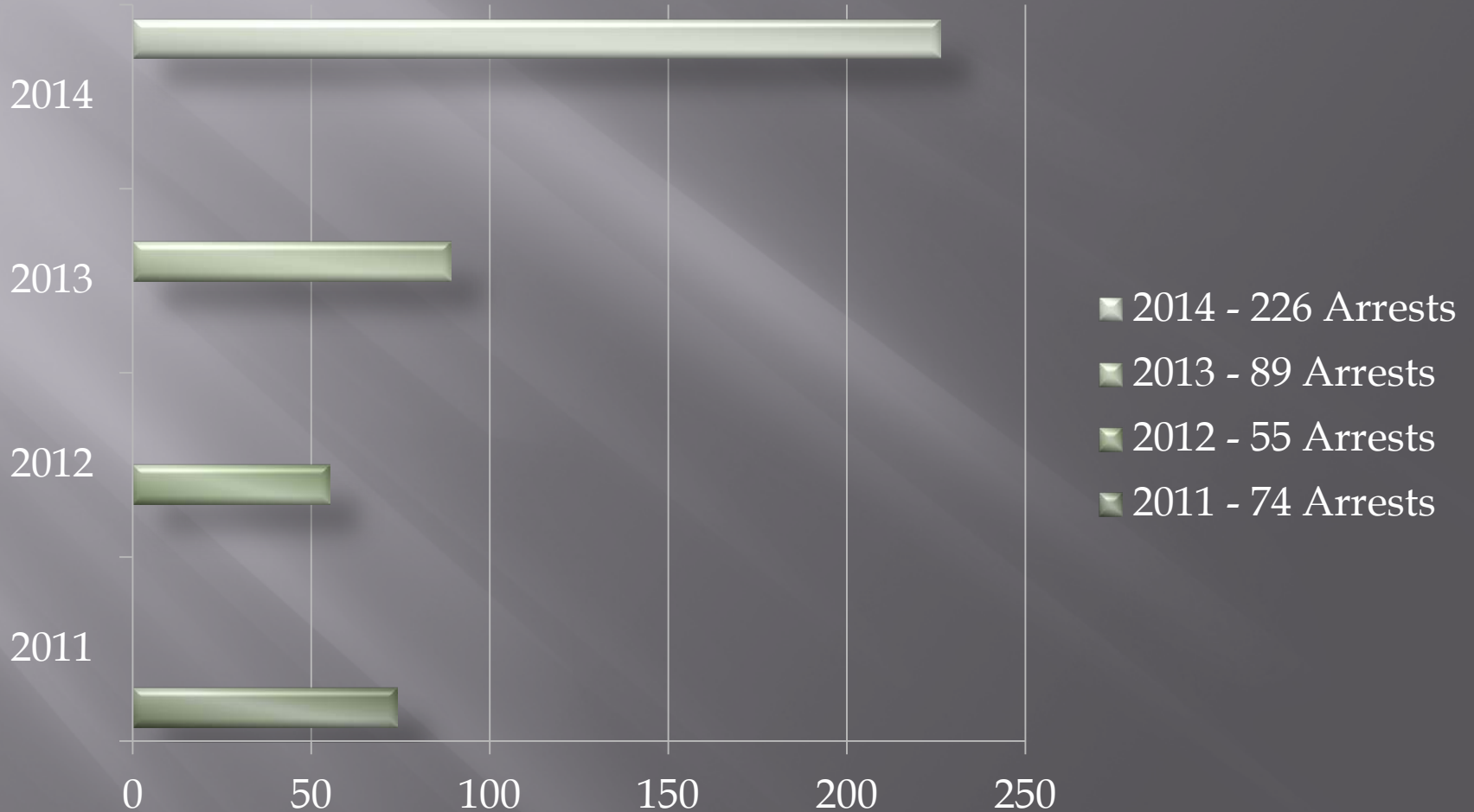


# 2014 Heroin Seized



The largest seizure occurred in Warren/Shenandoah County.

# 2014 Heroin Arrests



# We have a problem....

- Increase in seized Heroin, increase in overdoses both fatal and non-fatal, increase in property crimes, increased arrests.
- “We can’t arrest our way out of this problem”
- Community support, and stakeholder participation in the fight against Heroin, and addiction.
- Multi-faceted approach to the problem: Enforcement, treatment, Prevention/education



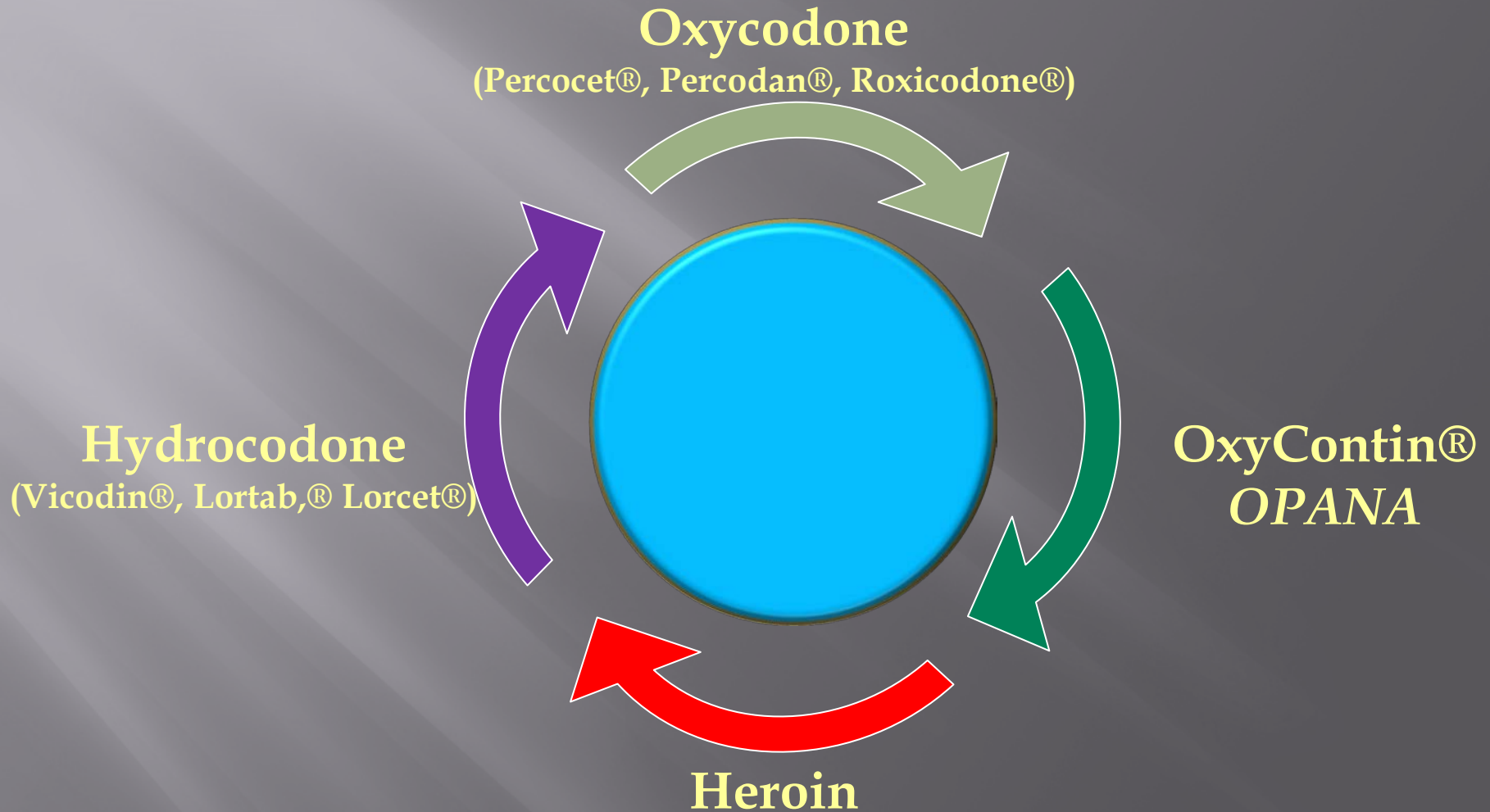
***“The Road to Heroin Starts  
With Prescription Drug Abuse”***



# Prescription Medications

- Interviews of Heroin users determined that the vast majority of them started with prescription medication abuse.
- Due to the rising cost of Prescription Meds. (approx. \$1 per milligram) street value, and the increased availability of Heroin and lower cost, users switched to Heroin.

# *Circle of Addiction*



# Challenges..

- No centralized reporting agency, overdoses not reported to law enforcement. Most jurisdictions have no idea, or any accurate data on overdoses.
- Often reported to EMS as medical emergencies, or general illnesses.
- Scenes of overdose deaths are most often “cleaned” before EMS and law enforcement arrive.

# Challenges Cont.

- OCME data often skewed due to drug “cocktails” in the victims system sometimes ruled a suicide.
- Reasons for overdose: Potency, use of alcohol, prescription meds. and Heroin, decreased tolerance due to treatment or incarceration, when relapse occurs victim uses the same amount as they did before they got clean.
- STIGMA: families and users are reluctant to seek help because of the stigma around Heroin use “Junkie”



# Stakeholder summits

- The first Community Stakeholder Summit was held in December 2013 to raise awareness and bring community leaders to the table. The first Summit was mostly law enforcement, Health care providers, and Treatment providers. This was the first step in gaining community support.
- A second Summit was held mid 2014, this time we invited State and Federal legislators, U.S. Attorneys office, DEA, ATF, FBI. We had a large turnout, approximately 125 attendees. We conducted presentations, and had breakout sessions to gather ideas from the different experts in attendance.

# Formation of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition.

- Committee formed with community partners Law Enforcement, Valley Health Systems, Probation Parole, Local Schools, Faith Based Organizations, Treatment and Counseling centers, and victims family members.
- Committee broken down into 3 subcommittees: Funding, Community Outreach, and Best Practices.
- Creation of website: [roadtorecovery.info](http://roadtorecovery.info)
- 501C3 Status, currently hiring an executive director through Valley Health Systems.

# The Heroin Highway

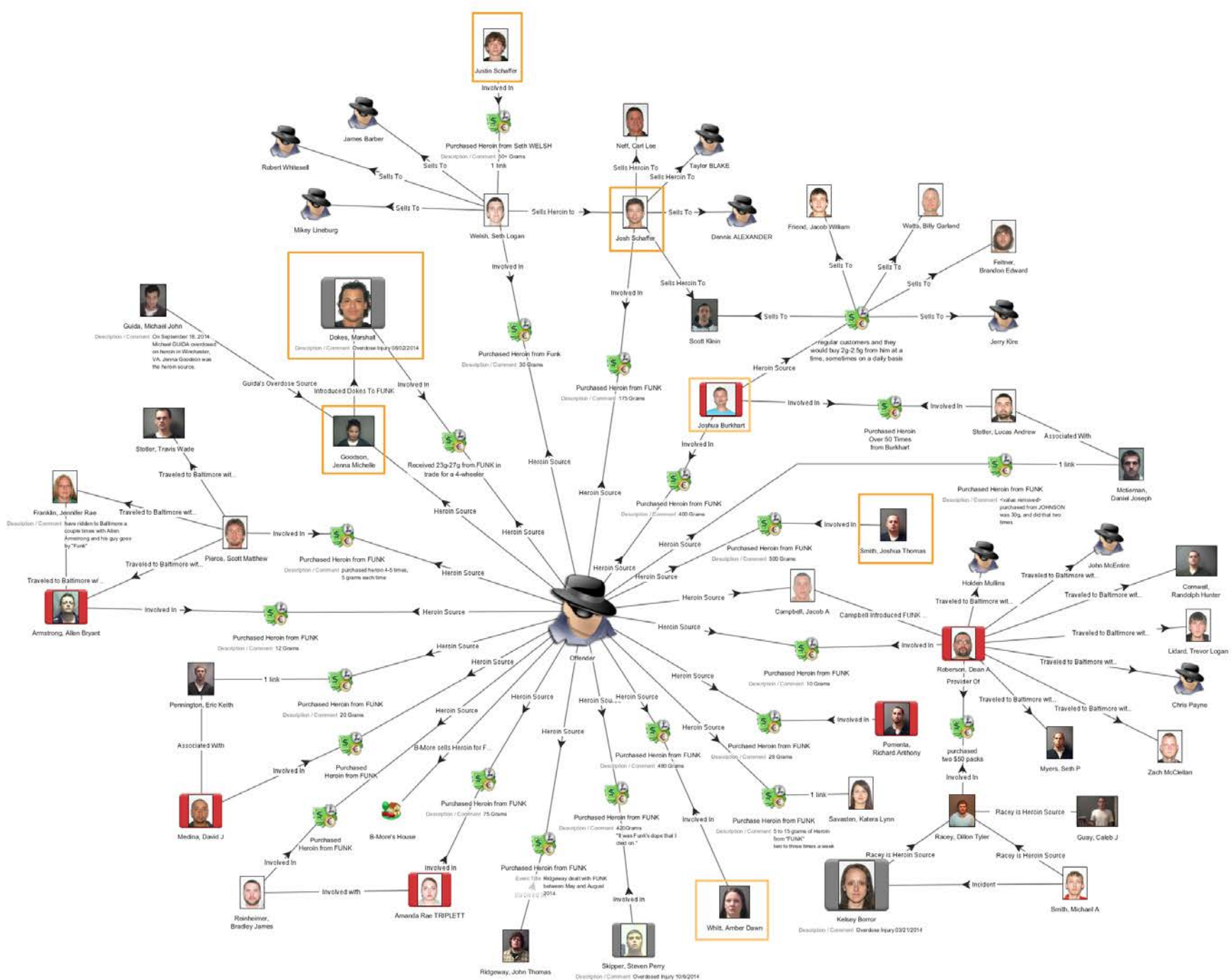
- The vast majority of the Heroin coming into our region comes from Baltimore MD
- Users and suppliers routinely make multiple trips to Baltimore, sometimes multiple times per day.
- The main corridor is Route 7, 340, and Interstate 70
- Baltimore MD is an open air drug market, Heroin seekers can buy from multiple different sources.



- Possession of less than 25 dosage units of Heroin is a misdemeanor in Baltimore
- When a “good dealer” is located by users in our region, users network together to buy from that source. This has attributed to multiple overdose injuries, and deaths from the same sources in Baltimore.
- In order to prosecute dealers in Baltimore, a case is built on small distributors in our region, as well as overdose victims.
- Special Grand Juries
- Analytical support
- Extremely labor intensive
- Through Relationships built with EMS, and emergency room personnel, the drug task force is notified of all overdoses, a Special Agent either responds to the scene or hospital to investigate the overdose.

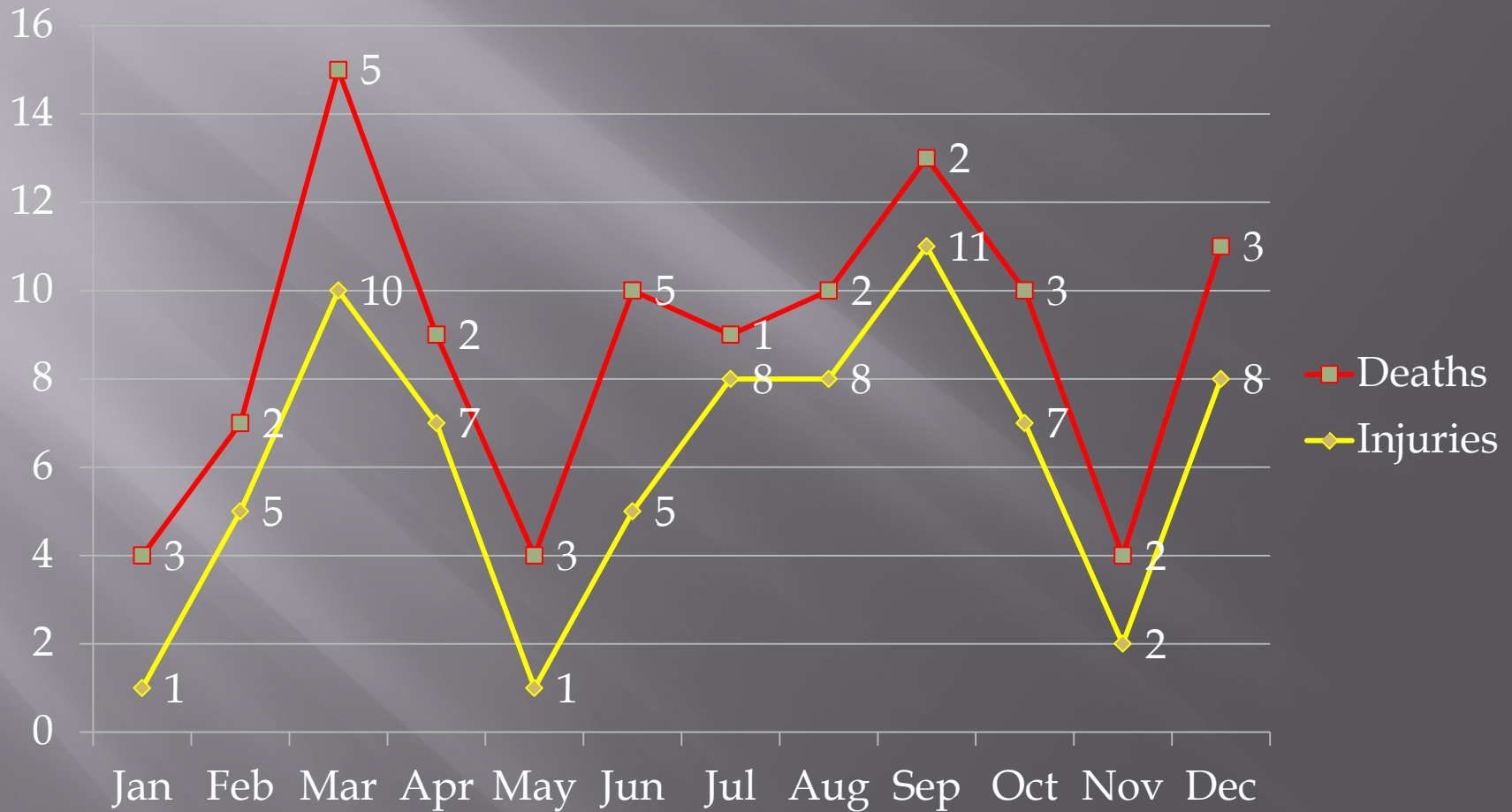








# 2014 Injuries/Deaths by month



# Risk Factors for Opioid Overdose

- Prior overdose
- Reduced tolerance-previous users who have stopped using due to abstinence, illness, treatment, incarceration.
- Mixing drugs-combining drugs including alcohol, combining stimulants and depressants do not cancel each other out.
- Using alone
- Potency



# Naloxone/Narcan

- Drug used to immediately counteract Opiate/Heroin overdose.
- HB 1458 enacted July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, this broadened immunity from civil liability to include anyone who prescribes, dispenses, or administers Naloxone; allowed for an oral, written, or standing order that would allow an individual to obtain Naloxone from a pharmacy without prescription.



# Naloxone/Narcan

- Can be administered nasally, or injected by a similar device to an Epi Pen.
- Evzio auto injector cost between \$500 and \$600
- Administered nasally cost is about \$120 for two doses.
- Due to demand the cost of Naloxone has gone up exponentially



# Affirmative defense

- HB 1500 allows for the safe reporting of overdoses. This allows a person to assert an affirmative defense against the following charges:
- Unlawful purchase, possession or consumption of alcohol
- Possession of a controlled substance
- Possession of Marijuana
- DIP
- Possession of controlled paraphernalia





# Action Plan

- Heroin has become a priority for the Drug Task Force as the overdoses and the deaths have become a concerning epidemic. This issue is taxing all public services, including Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue and Emergency Room Personnel.
- The solution will take a combination of law enforcement, strong treatment programs, prevention campaigns, community involvement and the cooperation of the medical community.
- Suggested MOU between agencies:
  - Treatment
  - Education
  - Aggressive enforcement and prosecution
  - Mandatory reporting
  - Funding: HIDTA designation was applied for, SAMHSA Grant Casey Foundation
  - Creation of a regionalized Drug Court



# Actions to date

- 3 Community stakeholder summits and community forums
- Cooperation with Valley Health systems and EMS
- Proposed legislative changes
- Formation of Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition
- Informational website [roadtorecovery.info](http://roadtorecovery.info)
- Drug take back initiatives: CVS pharmacy program
- RX 123 labels put on all prescriptions, “Use Medication as Prescribed”, “Don’t Give Medication to others”, “Dispose of Medications promptly”.
- Cooperation with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, to aggressively prosecute suppliers.



# Comments/Questions

