

WKU students gain insight into task force fighting the local drug problem

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Western Kentucky University students learned about the Warren County Drug Task Force during a presentation Wednesday afternoon by Deputy Director Tod Young.

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After serving in the military and earning a graduate degree from Western Kentucky University, Tod Young decided that statistics were not his calling. Instead, working to change those statistics was.

“I had a interest in statistics and research, but I think I really kind of felt like that law enforcement was really where I wanted to be,” Young said.

Young shared the story of his career path with WKU students Wednesday during a presentation at Grise Hall hosted by the Department of Sociology and Criminology.

The Bowling Green native told students about how he worked his way up in local law enforcement, going from the police department to the sheriff’s office to his current position as deputy director of the Warren County Drug Task Force.

The task force has been around for about 23 years, and Young has been a part of it for more than 15 of them. He had actually retired in 2018 but came back after nearly five months when task force founder and Director Thomas Loving offered him the deputy director position.

As part of the task force, Young works with multiple contributing agencies, ranging from the Kentucky State Police to the Department of Homeland Security, and he said all operations are overseen by an executive board of directors.

The majority of cases currently being pursued in Warren County relate to the psychostimulant methamphetamine, according to Young.

“We are subject to what the demand is and what the supply is,” Young said. “So there may be a high demand for something with no supply, that will affect what kind of cases we do. Like right now, we have a huge supply of methamphetamine coming in here.”

A decrease in overall drug overdose death rates, paired with an increase in the rate of methamphetamine overdose deaths, is a recent trend reflected not only in Kentucky, but nationwide as well, according to the Centers for Disease Control on Prevention.

While the overall drug overdose death rate may be declining at the state and national level, in 2018, Warren County reportedly had 20 drug overdose deaths, the highest number recorded by the coroner’s office in the last decade.

As an affiliate of the Appalachia High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, the task force has been working with other local, state and federal entities to fight the drug epidemic and lower statistics for several years.

“We’re after the drug trafficking organizations, we’re after the mid- and upper-level dealer. We’re not in the rehab business, (but) other people are,” Young said.

“We try to focus on (trying) to stem the supply to this area, and we always try to find that next step, the nexus – because we know it’s not being produced here – to our out-of-state source. The crystal methamphetamine is typically coming through our southwest border.”

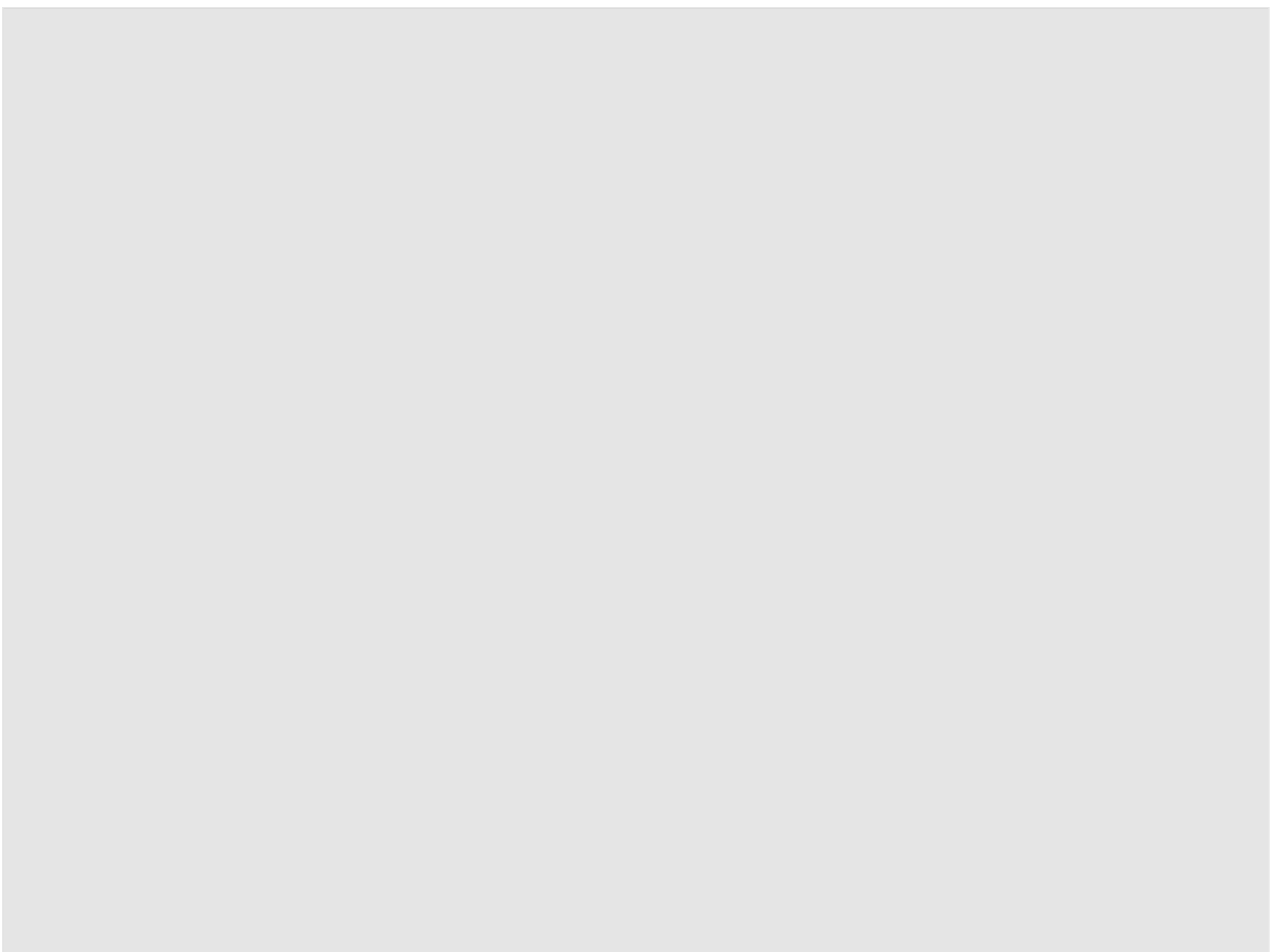
Attendee Abbie Jones, a senior and cadet at the Bowling Green Police Department, said she came to learn more about the organization.

“I just have always kinda been interested in the drug side of policing, and I just wanted to learn a little bit more about it because I’d heard of the drug task force through working at the police department,” Jones said.

“But this was kind of a more in-depth introduction into what they do exactly and the depth of the investigations that they do.”

Young said he enjoys the breadth of task force investigations, and the method as well.

“(Something) I’ve always liked about drug cases, as opposed to some other cases, is that I work that case from the beginning to the end,” Young said. “I’ve worked with some really good detectives here and with other agencies, got to travel across the states doing investigations, a lot of things (like I said) people can go their whole careers not getting to do. I’ve been very lucky.”



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