

Daily Corinthian

PICKWICK – The war on drugs is winnable.

It just has to be fought in a different way.

Dr. Suzanne Thomas shared the news with the Pickwick Republican Women during their monthly meeting at the Links Restaurant.

"This is a dear subject to my heart," said Thomas, who is also president of the women's group. "When it comes to drug addiction, we don't know what we are doing ... we have no leadership in that area."

Thomas, who has a Doctorate and Masters degree in Clinical Mental Health and Counseling Psychology, knows first hand what drugs do to a family after her son became addicted.

"I was completely lost when my son got addicted to drugs," she said.

The founder of WIFE (Women Involved for Enrichment) didn't sit by and watch her son destroy himself.

She took action.

"I began to research every drug out there," said the past board member of the Governor's Health Board for West Tennessee. "My son was dying from addiction, so I began calling universities for the latest research."

All the information pointed Dr. Thomas to nuclear science.

"In the 20th century, we looked at drugs as a moral issue," said the author of "Stumbling Stone" to the group. "What we are missing is the mental health issues ... those who are addicted need to be diagnosed."

She and her husband went through all the twists and turns associated with the addiction of a loved one.

"I looked at my son and said 'how could you do this,'" she said. "We need to take addicts out of the moral box and put them in a medical model."

According to Dr. Thomas, Tennessee is losing the war on drug recovery because it has fallen behind so many other states.

"We have to do things differently," said Thomas. "Mothers call me every day wanting to know what to do."

One thing to do is not give up.

"I was told my son would never be well, but today he is doing great," said the group president. "Don't believe once a drug addict always a drug addict."

The healing process starts with the brain. Thomas said once the brain is healed, recovery can begin.

Thomas shared with the group that rehab plays a big part in helping addicts get back on the right track.

"After-care is a way to win the war," said the doctor. "Right now, we are losing in the rehab effort."

Thomas' son spent every day in counseling for three months during his recovery process.

"It takes time, it's not an overnight thing," said Dr. Thomas. "I am not saying I have all the answers ... just that we are losing the battle."

Members of the Republican Women came away impressed with the program of

Thomas.

"Suzanne has fought the battle and come through it," said member Faye Trim. "She and her husband recognized the problem and did what it took to get their son help."

Trim agrees the war on drugs has lost ground through the years.

"We have got no better since the 70s," said Trim. "Suzanne is right in what she is saying ... drugs have been passed on from generation to generation and it takes years to heal those who are addicted."