

Mental Health Association Responds to Overdose Crisis

Challenges and Resources

Allison Murphy, peer support specialist for the Mental Health Association's (MHA) Overdose Response Team, was busy *before* the coronavirus pandemic hit last winter. Sadly, but not unexpectedly, the need for her to respond to known overdoses in Chautauqua County has surged.

For 20 years Allison had been addicted to alcohol and dabbled in drugs. Four years ago she learned that her liver was working at only five percent capacity. Following successful detox, weekly medical visits, and participation in peer groups, she first got work as a teachers aide. She has been reaching out to others through the MHA now for more than a year and a half.

Chautauqua County's participation in ODMAP (Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program) enables public officials to gather data on fatal and non-fatal overdoses. Law enforcement officers enter basic information about an overdose into the ODMAP website that County Health and Human Services staff monitor daily. (Learn more at odmap.org.)

As soon as she learns of the overdose, Allison arms herself with Narcan and a care package and attempts to meet with the overdose victim. As a peer, she offers a connection to services at the MHA and other community agencies, perhaps accompanying them to the hospital and advocating for them with medical staff. Her goal is to help them and their family or friends find resources to avoid a recurrence, whether by recovery through rehab or harm reduction with testing kits and Narcan.

When MHA OD Response Team staffer Allison Murphy receives report of an overdose, she brings Narcan for training and an information packet with contact information for Peer & County Recovery Resources.



Of her work, Allison says, "I want people to know that they're not alone. I want them to know that I'm going to be here for them, whenever they are ready. I will continue to support them with whatever they need: food, shelter, or just an ear to listen, as being alone in addiction is deadly. If it weren't for the peer support I received from the MHA when I was beginning my journey, I'm not sure where I would be today."

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb notes that while the surge in overdoses is *(continued on page 3)*

Giving Tuesday: December 1, 2020

A Great Time to Support the MHA!

Perhaps the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County has helped you find yourself. Perhaps it has brought someone you love back to you. Perhaps you're just thankful for all the good it does in our community. Whatever makes you grateful that the MHA is here, if you would like to say "thank you," Tuesday, December 1, is a great opportunity to show your appreciation. The Tuesday after Thanksgiving/Black Friday/Cyber Monday has been designated Giving Tuesday, an international day of charitable giving. You can show your thanks for the MHA and help continue its important work with a donation at MHACHautauqua.org/Donate or on the MHA Facebook page or by mailing a check to 31 Water Street, Jamestown, NY 14701.



MHA Happenings



In September, **National Recovery Month**, the MHA received a generous contribution from **Jamestown North Main Street Community Bank**. Staff will use the gift to meet immediate needs of those they serve, purchasing basic necessities -- items like shampoo, soap, toilet paper, socks, and underwear -- and occasional treats. Those pictured are all certified peer specialists and Narcan trainers: from left, Jesse John, Tasha McFaul-Marsh, OD Response Team Leader Allison Murphy, and CFO Jenny Rowe.

The MHA partnered with **St. Luke's Episcopal Church** in Jamestown to mark Overdose Awareness Day on August 30. Face masks and social distancing were required for the ecumenical service that remembered those in Chautauqua County who were lost to overdose in the past year. The service and the Narcan training that followed in the parking lot were both livestreamed. Elected officials participated in the well-attended event.



The MHA recognized October as **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** with a **Virtual Walk Against Domestic Violence**. The MHA's **#MeToo Support Group** meets Mondays at 5:30 p.m., facilitated by staff members (*from left*) Allison Murphy, Jenny Rowe, and Tasha McFaul-Marsh. As Jenny says, "Allison, Tasha and I have all experienced sexual abuse of some kind, and we all know how important it is to have a safe space where we can be respected and supported. Each of us has overcome trauma and for some of us a resulting substance use disorder. We didn't do it alone, and we are here to help other women in their journey. If you or someone you know has been affected by this, please join us."

MHA's Sheridan Smith is coordinator of **Jamestown Pride**, an outgrowth of the MHA Southern Tier Queer Peers group. In conjunction with the **Fenton History Center, Robert H. Jackson Center, Prevention Works, and Hope Chautauqua**, Jamestown Pride celebrated **National Coming Out Day** on October 11. After Jamestown Mayor Eddie Sundquist raised the Pride flag at City Hall, local members of the LGBTQIA+ community shared their stories in a webinar live-streamed from the Jackson Center.

These will be added to an exhibit the Fenton is preparing about Chautauqua County's LGBTQIA+ community. Pictured from left are Communications Coordinator at City of Jamestown Julia Ciesla-Hanley, Fenton Director Noah Goodling, Jackson Center President Kristan McMahan, and MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb.



Jamestown High School teacher Betsy Rowe-Baehr's **Justice for All students** learn about social injustices by getting out of the classroom, exploring society and making a difference. They received Narcan training when they visited the MHA this fall. MHA Narcan Trainer Allison Murphy is pictured on the left and Rowe-Baehr on the right; one of the two students in the middle is holding a Narcan kit.

MHA was a contact point for folks without access to the internet who wanted to complete the **United States Census**. Pictured is volunteer Ken Kendall (left), who assisted participants in filling out the census. Help was available in both Jamestown and Dunkirk.



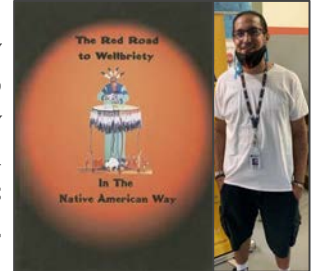
The work of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County is made possible by funding from Chautauqua County ♥ Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation ♥ Chautauqua Region Community Foundation ♥ United Way of Southern Chautauqua County ♥ Hultquist Foundation ♥ Lenna Foundation ♥ New York State ♥ Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation & many others

More MHA Happenings



MHA Certified Peer Specialist Sean Jones is using his background as a fine arts student at Jamestown Community College and locally displayed artist to lead new eight-session **Art in Recovery classes**. Seated around a still life so each one will have a different perspective, participants are learning the basics of painting and connecting it to self care in recovery. Pictured from left are Carrie Clarke, Roseann Crocker, and Sean.

MHA Certified Peer Specialist Jesse John, a member of the Seneca Nation, facilitates the new **Red Road to Wellbriety group** that meets Thursdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Wellbriety means to go beyond sobriety and recovery to a life of wellness and healing. Jesse brings his own recovery experiences to the group that is based on the book authored by White Bison, an American Indian/Alaska Native charitable organization. The group is spiritual-based and anyone is welcome. The book and worksheets to answer the questions are provided.



October 7, 2020, marked the one-year anniversary of the opening of the MHA's **northern Chautauqua County program** at Grace Lutheran Church, 601 Eagle Street in Dunkirk. It was a rough year that forced us to close for a few months, but we are back in action in person. Program hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Fridays, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Fr. Luke Fodor (*at right*) gave a \$1,000 check from **St. Luke's Episcopal Church's Thrift Shop** to MHA's Steven Cobb to help spread cheer to those who may struggle at the holidays.



All **Evergreen Health Services** for the Southern Tier including the **Syringe Exchange Program**, formerly at the Gateway Center where the MHA is located, are now at 320 Prather Avenue, Jamestown. Walk-ins are welcome. Call (716) 664-7855 for more information.

Overdose Response, *continued...*

(*from front*) continuing, the number of deaths is slowing, likely because of the increasing use of Narcan, the brand name for naloxone, the medication that has saved hundreds of lives in Chautauqua County. Narcan can be administered as a nasal spray by a first responder or friend, family member or bystander to someone who is experiencing an overdose of an opioid, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, or heroin.

All MHA staff are trained to teach others how to discuss overdose education and Narcan use. The free training can be presented in person or virtually to any group or organization. Narcan is given to each participant and can be mailed to virtual participants.

To schedule a group or individual training, call or text (716) 661-9044 or email info@MHACHautauqua.org. Learn about virtual training at MHACHautauqua.org/naloxone.

Also strengthening the response to the overdose crisis is the Chautauqua Substance Abuse Response Partnership (CSARP), a consortium of organizations that deal with multiple aspects of substance abuse. CSARP has tools and resources for the prevention of, treatment for, and recovery from substance use disorder at its website and YouTube channel at CombatAddictionCHQ.com/ and Facebook.com/CombatAddictionCHQ.

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A Message From MHA's Executive Director: Strong Starts Chautauqua

...by Steven Cobb

A lot of good work is being done at the MHA, as you're learning in this newsletter. I want to introduce you to a new program I'm particularly excited about.

Maternal drug misuse in Chautauqua County is so high that our rates of infant mortality and newborns who test positive for drugs are among the highest in the state. The survivors experience altered brain development resulting in grave learning and behavioural problems before they even enter school.

Strong Starts Chautauqua (StrongStartsChaut.com) represents nearly three dozen partners collaborating to prevent or mitigate these tragedies by working with mothers during their pregnancy and children in their earliest years.

At his clinic in Chicago, Dr. Ira Chasnoff treats children affected by prenatal maternal alcohol and drug use. Once thought to be untreatable, 58 percent are able to get off their heavy medications within a year. The award-winning author and Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Illinois College of Medicine made presentations here in late 2018 and 2019, addressing how prenatal substance abuse prevention, enhanced learning, and behavior management early in life can help a community avoid the human and financial costs of prenatal substance exposure. He is now advising Strong Starts Chautauqua, the program he inspired that is working with parents and helping kids learn to focus.



Dr. Davina Moss-King, a leading expert in substance abuse counseling and adjunct professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Services at Canisius College, focuses her work and research heavily on neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). She is also consulting with us, combining the MHA's and her Positive Direction (pdawny.com) models.

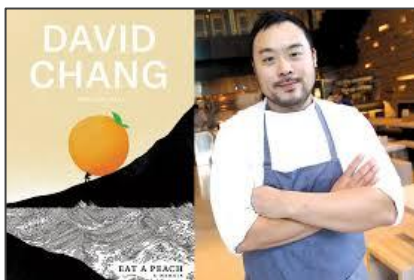
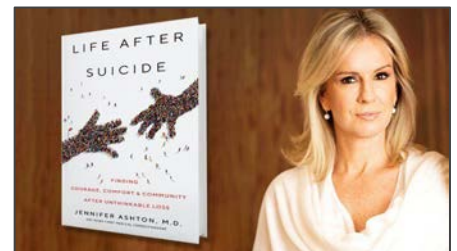
The MHA has two new recovery coaches who will join our two coaches already working with mothers. The coaches will be the

navigators that will be working with moms, supporting them through pregnancy and postpartum and getting help for their children later. Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene is developing programs to work with kids from birth to five. All partners will be working to keep mothers and children out of the court system.

Our goal is to make Strong Starts Chautauqua a self-sufficient program. Yet even more important we are creating something that has never been done before. We are optimistic that this program has the potential to be modeled across New York State and throughout the country. Most importantly we will create the support, so needed, to empower children, moms, and whole families to achieve their potential in our community.

Worth Reading, Worth Viewing

ABC News Chief Medical Correspondent **Jennifer Ashton's *Life After Suicide*** is an eloquent, heartbreaking, yet hopeful memoir of surviving the suicide of a loved one, examining this dangerous epidemic and offering first-hand knowledge and advice to help family and friends find peace. It is available through Jamestown's Prendergast Library. Search on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1111111111) to find a number of valuable interviews.



In ***Eat a Peach***, acclaimed chef, restaurateur and star of Netflix's *Ugly Delicious*, **David Chang** wrestles with his lifelong feelings of otherness and inadequacy, explores the mental illness that almost killed him, and finds hope in the shared value of deliciousness. This is available through Jamestown's Prendergast Library. Search on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1111111111) to find a number of related interviews.