

Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits: How a Vision Materialized

As you probably know, Jamestown's St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County (MHA) have partnered to create Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits, a social enterprise that addresses a basic unmet need in a financially sustainable way.

Father Bernard's exists to celebrate connection – with dogs and their human families – while providing employment opportunities for those who have dropped out of the workforce due to mental health concerns and addiction. The circular biscuits represent the ecosystem of connection and wellness that forms when those isolated by mental health and recovery struggles are reconnected and resourced by community.

What inspired such an unusual project, and how has it actually come to be?

In 2015 St. Luke's rector, Luke Fodor, took a group of youth on a pilgrimage to California. One of the places they visited was Homeboy Industries, a social enterprise started by Father Greg Boyle, a frequent speaker and chaplain at Chautauqua Institution.

With beginnings in 1988 where Los Angeles had the highest concentration of gang activity, Homeboy Industries is now the world's largest gang intervention, rehabilitation, and re-entry program. It gets inner city kids mental health help and skills so they can go to work -- and removes tattoos so they can get a fresh start. It employs and trains former gang members in a range of social enterprises and provides critical services to 10,000 people who walk through its doors every year seeking a better life.



Key figures in Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits gather in the kitchen in St. Luke's Undercroft. From left are Fr. Luke Fodor, Nicole Gustafson, Sean Jones, and Steven Cobb.

Fr. Luke had been thinking about launching a social enterprise at St. Luke's to continue the church's work to address the problems of generational poverty, societal isolation, mental illness, and addiction in Chautauqua County. Looking for the right idea, he talked with his parishioner, MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb.

As Fr. Luke explained, "Our work hosting pop-up pet clinics with the Humane Society, our annual dog blessings, and a meeting with a colleague in Buffalo who was in the process of giving up a pet store he owned to become a priest are some of the elements that lead into Father Bernard's."

In 2019 a planning team was formed of folks from St. Luke's and the MHA. In addition to Fr. Luke and Steven, it included Gordon Fisher, Nicole Gustafson, Paul Johnson, Liz Jones, Sean Jones, Betsy Morando, Brian Papalia, Dr. Robert Rappole, Matt Smith, and Rob Wohlgemuth. *(cont. on p. 4)*

Giving Tuesday: November 30, 2021

An Opportunity to Say "Thank You" for the MHA

Did the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County bring someone you love back to you, or perhaps help you find yourself?



Maybe you're just thankful for all the good it does in our community. Whatever makes you grateful that the MHA is here, Tuesday, November 30, is a great opportunity to show your appreciation. After the feasting that happens on Thanksgiving and the shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the next Tuesday 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 MHA, 31 Water Street, Suite 7, Jamestown NY 14701.

MHA Happenings



The MHA, along with many other wonderful nonprofit organizations and charities from western New York, were part of the first-ever **Give716** giving day presented by the Buffalo Bills and Buffalo Sabres foundations on July 16. Funds raised were used to expand services and supports in the MHA's Dunkirk location.

New MHA staffer and certified personal trainer **Brian Mayo** (left in the picture) is leading a **Movement is Medicine** group at MHA, using exercise to help improve mental health and reduce stress. Those at any experience level are welcome Mondays and Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. or the low-mobility classes at 3 p.m. the same days. Like all MHA groups, they are free and open to the public. Brian was interviewed by Certified Peer Specialist Sean Jones (right) about the group on [MHA's Facebook page](#).



Executive Director Steven Cobb and Certified Peer Specialist Sean Jones represented the MHA at the August 21 **Jamestown-Chautauqua Arts Day** at Chautauqua Institution, a partnership facilitated by the Jamestown Justice Coalition. In addition to enjoying a performance of the one-man show *Thurgood* and the evening concert in the Amphitheater, they participated in a discussion about how the Institution could reach out and encourage partnerships with other organizations in the community.

MHA OD Response Team Leader Allison Murphy, Jamestown Community College's JJ the Jayhawk, and MHA Recovery Coach Ken Kendall participated in the **International Overdose Awareness Day Fair** at JCC's Jamestown campus. The purpose of the August 31 event was to remember people who have died from overdose, support people who struggle with substance use, and work against substance use stigma.



On October 2, MHA staff and participants took part in Jamestown's Unity Event that kicked off **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**. Pictured from left are MHA's CFO Jenny Rowe, Sitivia Allen, Recovery Coach Angel Mason, Julie Chairot, and OD Response Team Leader Allison Murphy, all violence survivors, who walked in the 24th annual Walk Against Domestic Violence. Jenny was among those from MHA who spoke to the crowd that then gathered inside the lobby of City Hall. The event was sponsored by the Chautauqua County Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

On October 9, the MHA was honored and inspired to be part of the tenth annual Jamestown Out of the Darkness Walk. Hosted by the Suicide Prevention Alliance of Chautauqua County, the event was held at Jackson Taylor Park.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb (left) and IT Manager Joseph Vaughn staffed a table offering free Narcan and items to increase awareness of MHA and suicide prevention.



Visit [Facebook.com/SuicidePreventionAllianceofChautauquaCounty](https://www.facebook.com/SuicidePreventionAllianceofChautauquaCounty) for more info.



MHA Strong Starts Navigator Carrie Clarke (left) and volunteer Rob Bruyer practice their shots on the newly refurbished pool table that inspired MHA's **First Ever Pool Tournament**. The single-elimination event was scheduled for three Friday nights in November. This newsletter went to press before the two prize-winning players were determined.

The work of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County is made possible by funding from Appalachian Regional Commission ♥ Chautauqua County Departments of Mental Hygiene and Health & Human Services ♥ New York State Chautauqua Region Community Foundation ♥ Hultquist Foundation ♥ Lenna Foundation ♥ Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation ♥ Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation ♥ The Tower Foundation ♥ United Way of Southern Chautauqua County ♥ UPMC Chautauqua ♥ and others.

Art of Recovery Exhibit Celebrated International Overdose Awareness Day

The Undercroft of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in downtown Jamestown was the setting on Saturday evening, August 28, 2021, for the Art of Recovery Exhibit. It was presented by St. Luke's in partnership with the Mental Health Association to raise awareness for International Overdose Awareness Day, August 31.

Local artists who shared how they celebrated their own creativity and recovery included Carrie Clarke, Nicole Crawford, Roseann Crocker, Lindsey Erickson, Melita Lyon, Joanne Porterfield, and Joseph Scoma.



St. Luke's Episcopal Church was the venue for the Art of Recovery Exhibit presented by St. Luke's and the MHA. One of the visitors, Jamestown Mayor Eddie Sundquist (left), is pictured with MHA staffer Sean Jones beside the painting "Francis Bacon Study" by Roseann Crocker.

The show was coordinated by MHA's Sean Jones and St. Luke's Jessica Frederick. They also created an art installation in the church sanctuary to represent people in recovery: ribbons of two shades of purple, the recovery/overdose color, hung in a formation to symbolize people that have passed on from their substance use issues.

The Art of Recovery event developed while St. Luke's and the MHA were preparing to observe their second annual Recovery Sunday on August 29. MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb delivered the sermon for that service. Candles were lit and bells tolled for all those who lost their lives to drug overdose in Chautauqua County over the past year. The art could be viewed before and after the service.

Following the service, MHA staff led a **Narcan training**. Narcan is the brand name for naloxone, a safe, easily administered medication that has saved hundreds of lives in Chautauqua County from possible opioid overdose. MHA can provide group training in how to administer Narcan at any workplace, church, or social gathering. Narcan can be delivered at no charge within Chautauqua County by requesting at narcan@MHACHautauqua.org. Training is also available on the MHA's website at MHACHautauqua.org/naloxone.



This work by Lindsey Erickson was on display and served as the emblem for the Art of Recovery Exhibit.

Strong Starts/SMART Recovery Family and Friends Chautauqua

As featured in the [Spring 2021 MHA Newsletter](#), Strong Starts Chautauqua is a life-saving initiative designed to help pregnant women and young children in Chautauqua County. The Partner Spotlight on Strong Starts' website, StrongStartsChaut.com, notes that the MHA provides participants the hope, inspiration and the glue that holds things together.

Meeting one of MHA's goals for Strong Starts, MHA Director of Student Activities Ken Yergens and volunteer Barbara Ravellette (*pictured*) are facilitating SMART Recovery Family and Friends Chautauqua. The group supports folks who are in parenting/caregiving roles with those who are still using. Based on the [SMART Recovery Family and Friends Handbook](#), it meets on Tuesdays at 6 p.m.

As Barb describes, "Successful recovery on the part of both family and friends as well as the person with problematic behavior requires good choices, because support people have probably neglected their own goals and needs. Concentrating on yourselves and your own goals will help you establish healthy relationships with your loved ones." All are welcome and, like all MHA services, there is no charge for participation in the group.



A Message From MHA's Executive Director: Good News from New York State

...by Steven Cobb

We were proud to have Recovery Coach Carrie Clarke represent the MHA on October 26 to meet with New York State Attorney General Letitia James at UPMC Chautauqua's Jones Memorial Health Center. UPMC Patient Care Technician Daniel Carson and Carrie shared their own recovery paths and stressed the importance of peer recovery movements like the Mental Health Association.



At this gathering of a number of local elected officials at UPMC's residential substance use disorder treatment program, James delivered just over \$2.5 million to combat, treat and prevent opioid addiction in Chautauqua County. She encouraged Daniel and Carrie to share their priorities with those who will be deciding how to allocate these funds.

Also this fall, New York State took a major step toward reducing drug-related overdose deaths across the state and encouraging those suffering from addiction to seek help in their recovery. After passage by the legislature, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law a package of bills dealing with the opioid addiction crisis.

The decriminalization of hypodermic needles and syringes will contribute to public safety by permitting harm reduction

approaches for those suffering from substance use disorder and reducing the rate at which HIV and hepatitis are transmitted.

A program will be established for the use of medication assisted treatment for incarcerated individuals, and judges can now order an increased number of individuals to treatment instead of incarceration, allowing them a greater chance for successful, long-term rehabilitation.

Now no one needs to avoid carrying Narcan for fear of legal consequences, and an online directory will allow

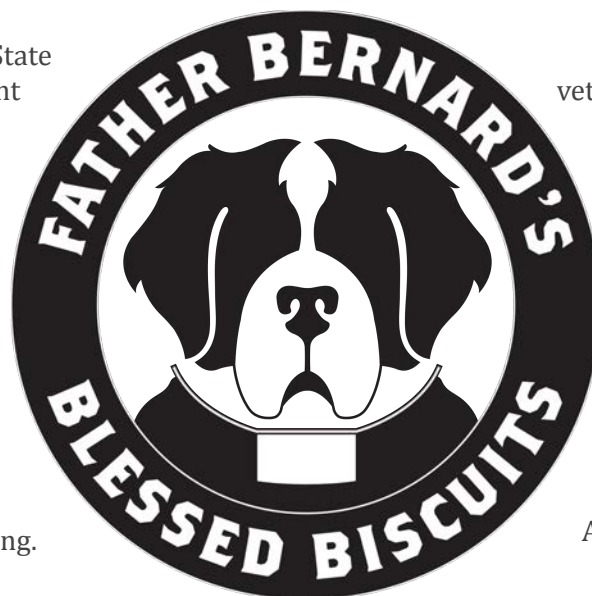
New Yorkers to easily locate it in their communities. When signing the bills, Governor Hochul said, "This is a personal battle for me." She shared the story of her nephew, Michael, who was prescribed an opiate-based painkiller when he cut himself on a meat slicer while working at a deli as a teen. After becoming addicted and seeking drugs on the street, he became homeless and went to prison. Later he began to turn his life around, becoming a sports coach and an addiction counselor, until he slipped up and died after overdosing on fentanyl.

This series of bills and the \$2.5 million grant will have a significant impact in fighting opioid addiction both here and across New York. I am delighted to see these positive actions at the top levels of government in our state!

Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits... continued from p. 1

MHA's participation in ESPRI (Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative) and a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) provided the experience and financial footing to bring the plans to fruition.

Father Bernard's kitchen is located in St. Luke's Undercroft, where Fr. Luke and Nicole Gustafson manage the marketing, inventory, and more. MHA Certified Peer Specialist Sean Jones, a former chef and baker, continues to tweak the recipe as well as oversee the process of production and peer managing.



Having shared a bag with his own pets, veterinarian Dr. Rappole says, "I can happily confirm that Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits are the best canine treats I have ever eaten... a healthy, safe treat that will get a wag from your pet and help our community."

Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits were sold all season at the downtown Jamestown Public Market. They can be purchased through the website FatherBernards.com.

And now you know "the rest of the story"!

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