

## MHA Opens Critically Needed Warming Center

Since early January, the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County has provided a warm bed and “help yourself” dinner and breakfast for up to 22 people who would otherwise be seeking shelter on the streets.

Many of these nights were “code blue,” when the temperature or wind chill was below 32 degrees. With the number of referrals from the Jamestown Police Department and the Chautauqua County Department of Social Services, two beds were added to the original 20.

Each guest is provided with a cot and mattress, pillows, blankets and a tote to store personal belongings. Because most guests spend their days at the MHA, which is closed Sundays, the facility is open all day on Sunday. It is staying open nightly until the end of May.

A lot of trauma is behind and comes from being unhoused. During the day, Director Shannon Fisk and Navigators Wilma Figueroa and Sienna Swanson work with guests with the goal of getting each one in a position where they will not need emergency shelter.

In addition to participating in MHA groups, guests receive help to obtain clothes, identification (birth certificates and driver’s licenses), walkers and canes, Medicare and Medicaid. Navigators assist with finding a job or an apartment or starting school, pick up medications, provide transportation to various appointments, and serve as advocates at those appointments.

Like the MHA, the new warming center is housed in the



*Jamestown Mayor Eddie Sundquist (from left) visits the Warming Center with MHA Project Manager Sean Jones and Executive Director Steven Cobb.*

Gateway Center, 31 Water Street in Jamestown. Guests are grateful for this place where they feel safe and comfortable and for the services they receive. As one said, “It warmed my soul and saved my life on a cold day.” Another described the staff as “very helpful, generous and caring.”

The warming center is supported by the Chautauqua County Department of Social Services with funds from New York State and by the City of Jamestown with funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The generous donations of food, clothes, blankets, and funds from many individuals, businesses, community groups and faith-based organizations have been invaluable.



*The kitchen (left) and the eating/social area of the MHA's new warming center.*

*Holiday Happenings...since last fall's newsletter!*



MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb and Jamie Billquist hold a check from Rosie's Run, the annual 5K run/walk in memory of Rosemary "Rosie" Billquist. Given right before Christmas, the generous donation was for supplies for MHA's new warming center in the Gateway Center. (below)



We have always known that it takes a community for recovery to be possible. Gifts from Chautauqua Patrons Insurance employees' food drive were shared among participants in need. Making the delivery were (in front, from left) Lauren Gutman, Megan Hirsch, and Kimberly Brink Hagelin. MHA Peer Specialist Mark Lehere and Executive Director Steven Cobb behind.



Ryan Saunders (above right), Fire Prevention Officer with the Jamestown NY Fire Department Local 137, helped serve the meal of pasta e fagioli, salads and delicious desserts prepared and served by St. Luke's Episcopal Church for the December 20 recovery luncheon. Working with him (from left) are Deacon Cathy Smith, Marge Fiore, Sandy Harley and Linda McCallum.



MHA's staff and volunteers gathered two days before Christmas for breakfast to celebrate the holidays and the end of the year. Thanks to St. Luke's for welcoming us so warmly.

## MHA Strong Starts Navigator Jessica Crooks Receives United Way Community Impact Award

MHA Strong Starts Navigator Jessica Crooks was one of three recipients of the second annual Impact Awards at the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County’s Campaign Celebration. Awards went to individuals nominated by United Way community partners who embody what it means to be impacted by a United Way program and who make their own impact in their community.

Each award recipient received a commemorative award, \$100 to give to the community organization of their choice, and the opportunity to serve as a United Way allocations volunteer for the year. Jessica’s journey of recovery from participant to peer specialist has been nothing but extraordinary. Everyone at MHA knows this, and now the community has been let in on the secret! The January 24 event was held at the Northwest Arena.



Jessica Crooks (left) with her mother and mentor, Debra Smith



United Way of Southern Chautauqua County

## MHA Dunkirk Staffer Ken Kendall and Son Featured in Spectrum News Stories



Following a 42-year addiction that began when he was 8, Ken Kendall (left) says he is now living “the best life I could ever live.” As MHA’s Dunkirk floor manager, Ken finds, “There’s nothing more rewarding than to know that you help folks survive a deadly disease.”

In a [Spectrum News story](#) in early January, “Western NY man shares struggle with addiction, tipping point that turned his life around,” Ken described his years of misery, finally overdosing 10 times in one week, driving over 100 mph, and hitting a parked car. After learning no one was hurt and spending a week in jail, he had a major revelation. That was four years ago, when he started turning his life around.

Spectrum News featured a later [story about Ken’s son, Kenny](#), “Western NY man follows in his father’s dangerous footsteps of addiction, long road to recovery.” Kenny (right, with his certificate for completing treatment last fall) said he had lost “everything”: his apartment, his kids and his wife. Now he volunteers at the MHA in Jamestown, where he attends events and support groups to stay busy and clean. Of his recovery, Kenny said, “I wouldn’t have done this without MHA and my dad.”



On the programs, Steve Kilburn, grant projects director at the Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene, reported that in 2021 overdose deaths in the county averaged more than one a

week, with fentanyl replacing heroin, and acknowledged the suffering of families, friends and neighbors. Kilburn noted the genetic component of addiction, as both Ken’s father and grandfather were addicted to alcohol.

When Ken’s story caught the attention of the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), they planned to include him in their profiles of people in recovery. Now Ken says, “Holy cow! What an amazing feeling to have a career where you can use your negative past and create a positive future. I couldn’t be more blessed.”



### MHA Advisory Committee Members

Dr. Elizabeth Kidder, Chair ♥ Chief Timothy Jackson  
 Leanna Luka-Conley ♥ Fr. Luke Fodor ♥ Patricia McClennan  
 Cecil Miller ♥ Dr. Lillian Ney ♥ Andrew O’Brien  
 Sheriff James Quattrone ♥ Christine Schuyler

### MHA Board Members

Kimberly Lombard, President ♥ Sarah Trantum, Vice President  
 Jacob Kohler, Treasurer ♥ Julie Apperson, Secretary  
 Marie Anderson ♥ Lindsey Isaac-Lopus ♥ Crystal Surdyk

## MHA Support Groups

### Alternatives to Suicide \*

For people who have struggled with suicidal thoughts.

### Anger Management

Working to develop skills for dealing with anger.

### Art in Recovery

An artistic expression of your personal recovery.

### Depression & Anxiety Support by

For those facing depression & anxiety in their daily lives.

### Family & Friends Support

Support for families and friends of those in recovery.

### Food Relationship Support

Having a healthy relationship with food and body image.

### Fun Friday

Open group using activities to socialize and unwind.

### Grounding

Self-check-in from the weekend to refocus on recovery.

### Knitting for Well-being

Use knitting to improve your wellbeing.

### Living After Incarceration

Finding self-sufficiency and avoiding going back to jail.

### Mom Tribe \*

Education and support for expecting & new mothers

### Movement is Medicine

Exercise for healthy recovery. *Low-mobility accessible*

### Music Therapy

Discussion on our favorite songs & how they make us feel.

### Open Topic

An open discussion group for any topic.

## 12-Step Groups

### AA Living Sober

12-step alcohol recovery group based on the book.

### AA Look to This Day

12-step alcohol recovery focused on living each day

### CMA Crystal Clear

12-step support for crystal meth.




### Staying Sober Your Way

A secular 12-step approach to recovery.

### We Believe

12 Step recovery group based on biblical principles.

For up-to-date info, find our calendars at <http://www.MHACHautauqua.org/groups>

- \* **Restricted** - Access only for certain people
-  **Classes** - Full attendance required for completion
-  **12-Step** - Structured format
-  **Unaffiliated** - Hosted at MHA by other organizations

### Positive Parenting Program from

Free discussion workshops for parents of kids & teens.

### PTSD Groups - *Men\**, *Women\**, *Co-ed*, and *faith based*

Skills to heal trauma for people in recovery.

### Recovery Dharma

Based on principles of mindfulness and meditation.

### Recovery Through Photography

Photography for personal healing and growth

### Recovery Yoga by Jen Raines

Yoga techniques to support a healthy body and mind.

### Self-Worth and Confidence

Recognizing your value and that you are worthy of love.

### Setting Boundaries

Developing healthy boundaries for those in recovery.

### SMART Recovery

Self-Management And Recovery Training with secular and scientific motivational recovery methods.

### Sober Planning

Various ways for staying sober during the weekend.

### Suicide Prevention And Continued Encouragement

For people who have struggled with suicidal thoughts.

### Truth Talks \*

Discussion for those that have experienced sexual trauma.

### Veterans Group

Open support group for veterans and their families

### Women's Group \*

Open topic support group for women.

### Women in Sobriety \*

For women who struggle with substance use & self-image.

### Writing Through Recovery

Writing to empower recovery and personal growth.

## Grupos de Apoyo en Español

### Alcohólicos Anónimos

Recuperación del alcoholismo en 12 pasos.

### Metanfetamina Cristalina Anónimo

Recuperación del metanfetamina cristalina en 12 pasos.

### Recuperación del TEPT

Técnicas para tratar el trastorno de estrés postraumático.

### Room for More

If you would like to see a group focused on a particular topic or for more information on our groups and other services, contact our Program Director at [programs@mhachautauqua.org](mailto:programs@mhachautauqua.org)

## Major Programs of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County

### Personal Coaching

Individual peer support, recovery coaching, access to care, referrals, advocacy, and community support for individuals & their families affected by mental health & substance use issues

### Peer Support Groups

A variety of groups take place at the MHA supporting multiple pathways of recovery.



A cooperative endeavor with a local network of organizations to provide peer support and connections to resources for moms & moms-to-be, dedicated to building bright futures for Chautauqua County children and their families.

### Better For Families Program

Offers guidance, encouragement, and resources for individuals engaging with the family court system in partnership with the Chautauqua County Department of Health & Human services.

### Treatment Court Navigation

Support toward following the guidelines of and completing treatment court, as well as access to video conference court attendance.

### Jail Outreach

A peer coach meets with individuals during their incarceration to help them plan for release with information and resources to avoid falling into the same habits that got them there.

### Advocacy and Community Outreach

Offers groups at other locations in the community; holds events to educate, advocate, and connect the public; supports positive and healthy activities.

### Student Activities

Internships and project support for students from JCC, Fredonia State, St. Bonaventure, Edenborough State and more.



A career-focused support system providing education, resources, advocacy, & encouragement to attain, retain, and maintain stable employment.

### Transportation

Provides participants with free transportation to medical, court, employment, or treatment-related appointments.

### UPMC Connection

A peer presence in the hospital Inpatient, Outpatient, and Emergency Departments to advocate for and provide guidance to individuals with mental health and chemical dependence issues in stressful situations, as well as educate staff on resources and techniques available for treatment.

### Overdose Response

Connect with individuals and their families shortly after an overdose event to provide comfort, support, education, guidance, resources, and encouragement toward safer habits and practices with cooperation from area law enforcement and critical response and a connection to the national:

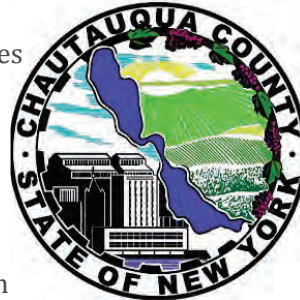


### Narcan Training

Individual and group training for identifying an overdose in progress and the proper steps for administering Narcan and getting help, as well as free Narcan doses to keep on hand.

### Peer Training

Training, support, and resources to help people use their experiences to help others and join the growing professional peer community.



A social enterprise to help participants learn skills and habits important to retaining employment and gain experience that can help them in their search for future self sustainability.



## MHA Happenings



**Jamestown High School** students raised over \$6,936.57 for the MHA as part of the **2023 Battle of the Classes** held March 30 at the McElrath Gymnasium at JHS. Executive Director Steven Cobb accepted the donation from members of the high school student government. Proceeds benefited the **MHA's Warming Center**.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb was interviewed on **Jamestown's WRFA radio** about [FDA Considering Making Naloxone Available Over The Counter](#). Naloxone, or Narcan nasal spray, is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids, including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications, when given in time.



Gabby Rafan (*left*) and Bryan Boleratz, community outreach liaisons with **Goodskills Career Builder**, were special guests at the MHA's March recovery luncheon. Located on the Jamestown Community College campus, Goodskills prepares workers for careers in advanced manufacturing through four weeks of training provided at no cost to residents of Chautauqua County. The combination of classroom and hands-on experience helps to fill a growing need for skilled workers among businesses and provides opportunities for people to advance from minimum or low-wage jobs into higher paying careers.

On Tuesdays in April, many MHA staff wore teal to show support for **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**, honoring the resiliency and healing of survivors while highlighting this very important issue. Pictured here are Ed Lloyd, Joseph Vaughn, Sienna Swanson and Jill Marsh.



At MHA's April recovery luncheon executive director Steven Cobb (*left*) recognized volunteers **Peggy Lindsey** and **Tom DeBeau** – Peggy for her contribution to starting the Fun Friday Group and Tom for facilitating the faith-based PTSD men's group.

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

No matter where you live in the U.S., you can easily access 24/7 emotional support.

Call or text 988 or visit [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat) to chat with a caring counselor.

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 ♡ Chautauqua Region Community Foundation ♡ Hultquist Foundation ♡ Lenna Foundation ♡ NYS Office of Mental Health ♡ Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation ♡ Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation ♡ The Tower Foundation ♡ The United Ways of Northern and Southern Chautauqua County ♡ UPMC Chautauqua ♡ and others...

## A Message From MHA's Executive Director

...by Steven Cobb

At 11 a.m. on April 25, 2023, I walked into MHA's Code Blue shelter, where I saw Shannon, our warming center manager, who had joined the MHA last spring as an intern from JCC's Human Services program.

Shannon had taken quickly to our belief of radical acceptance: Meeting the MHA's participants where they are, with only love. Engaging them with harm reduction. Helping people who use substances to achieve **their** goals, not treatment providers' goals.

Recognizing often **their** goal has nothing to do with abstinence. Embracing that when you are still using, you look for a home, or a job, or better health, or a safe sleep, or NARCAN, or clean needles, or visitation with children, or peace of mind, or community, and—of course—love and respect.

Shannon was watching one of our guests, so sick from detox he couldn't walk due to the muscle spasms in his legs and lack of sleep. We took him to Jones Hill to see one of our prescriber colleagues who embraces harm reduction as we do. With a script for suboxone, in a few hours our guest was riding his bike around our parking lot in the spring sun. He had taken a small step closer to a healthier life. He might have experienced a bit of hope in the acceptance, or love, we showed him.

We knew that getting to this positive choice took weeks



of him struggling, using fentanyl and meth regularly. Fights, arrests and too many overdoses. He might use substances again, even tonight. But in so much of the healing that happens for those of us with substance use and mental health challenges, the foundation is built on reducing stigma, radical acceptance, and love.

Since January 6, 2023, the MHA has served 191 citizens of our community. We have struggled, worked and grown

to live by our stated principles of harm reduction and radical acceptance. It's hard to serve vulnerable people this way. Putting abstinence, hard rules, and order first would be so much easier. But we know that acceptance, respect and love is how to blaze a way to recovery.

Our county has struggled to practice what we preach about acceptance and harm reduction. Yet walking through the doubt, fear, and lack of confidence has made the MHA better at what we do and better at serving our participants. May all the hard-working peer specialists, clinicians, doctors, nurses, first responders, security guards, politicians, faith leaders and citizens be inspired by the success and failures of our experiment. We can make this problem better. Together. Leaving behind what just hasn't been working.

### Highlighting a Few of MHA's Many Groups: All Are Free and Open to Anyone



Air Force veteran and MHA Finance Director Jill Marsh facilitates the MHA's Veterans Group that meets every Wednesday, 11 a.m. to noon. In addition to veterans and their families, currently active military and their family members and friends are also welcome. The open conversation about unique or shared interests and concerns supports all who participate, and help is available for connecting with the Veterans Administration.



When participants wanted something upbeat and fun to get them through the weekend, MHA Activities Director Dianne Valvo and her volunteer assistant, Martha Martin, created the Fun Friday Group, now meeting every Friday, noon to 2 p.m. The group enjoys arts and crafts, games, adult coloring books, bingo with prizes, and field trips; more activities will be offered as the weather improves. Since many MHA participants sit home during the weekend, this is a fun and relaxing end for the week. Participants emphasize that recreational activities help with mental health: It is important to laugh, have fun, and socialize!

### Grief Group

With 30 years experience as a funeral director/deputy coroner, MHA Peer Specialist Ed Lloyd facilitates the Grief Group every Tuesday, 9:45 a.m. -10:45 a.m. As a response to loss, grief can come from losing a loved one, a pet, a job, a relationship or a home, setting off a series of events that may not be understood, with emotions that are hard to handle. Supportive as well as educational, conversation is unstructured; questions are addressed about the loss itself and situations that may arise before the actual event.

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## TWO WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THE MHA!

### Give Big CHQ - Thursday, June 8, 2023

Hosted by the Chautauqua Region and Northern Chautauqua Community Foundations, Give Big CHQ is a 24-hour online fundraising event that connects individuals with causes they care about in Chautauqua County. Money raised will directly assist the participants that MHA serves – for emergency housing, food, transportation... and sometimes even a small treat to celebrate an achievement or provide a needed lift.

MHA will be eligible for cash prize incentives throughout the day. **On Thursday, June 8, go to [GiveBigCHQ.org](http://GiveBigCHQ.org), search for Mental Health Association, and Give Big! *Thank you!!!***



### Target Circle June 30 Voting Deadline



MHA is featured in **Target Circle™**! Every time you shop with Target Circle™, you earn a vote to use towards a nonprofit. Place a vote for us in the Target app.



Here's how:

- Step 1: Choose "My Target" in the Target app
- Step 2: Tap on "Target Circle™"
- Step 3: Select "Vote for nonprofits"
- Step 4: Find us & vote!

### Voting Deadline is June 30!

