The Connection

From The Administrator

“The road to recovery will not always be easy but I will take it one day at a time, focusing on the moments I’ve dreamed about for so long.”

- Amanda Lindhout

September is recognized as National Recovery Month from substance use and mental health disorders. It is a time when we pause to recognize all of those individuals who have attained recovery, provide hope to those still seeking recovery, and to remember those lives lost to the disease of addiction. This year we will once again recognize Recovery Month with our annual “Lights of Hope” event on Thursday, September 5, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. on the Courthouse steps. There will be more to come on this event in the summer edition of The Connection.

In the meantime, we are in the midst of spring, when we begin to see the flowers, shrubs, and trees blooming to life after a long and cold winter. It is with this amazing phenomenon in mind that I am so excited to share with you that a committee of very dedicated individuals is planning an inaugural event called “Bloom into Recovery”! This event is ALL about recovery and plans to be an interactive day of sharing various programs which promote recovery in very positive and healthy ways. The event will take place on Saturday, May 18, 2019 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Penn State’s Abington Campus at 1600 Woodland Road in Abington. It is sure to be a wonderful event and we encourage all those interested in finding out more information on successful recovery journeys to plan on attending the event.

I would also like to call your attention to an article on page 7 of this newsletter to hear first-hand from Per Hagen, Volunteer Coordinator for Pro-Act as he so thoroughly and eloquently explains just what Peer Recovery Support Services (PRSS) are and how they saved his life! Thank you Per for sharing your story!

I encourage everyone to see, smell, and feel all that is blooming around you this spring!

Sincerely,

Kay McGowan
SAVE THE DATE
2019 MONTGOMERY COUNTY SAP CONFERENCE

Montgomery County School District
Student Assistance Program (SAP)
Team Members are invited to attend

5 NOVEMBER 2019
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
WORKMERK CONSHY
100 Four Falls Corporate Center, Suite 106
Conshohocken, PA 19428

Presented in partnership between the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Offices of Drug & Alcohol and Mental Health and the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

Be a part of the CONVERSATION
www.conversation.zone

Shining a Light on the Opioid Crisis

Tuesday, April 23, 2019
6:30 - 8:30 pm
Montgomery Township Community Center
1030 Horsham Road
Montgomeryville, PA 18936

Join us for a very important conversation about our nation’s public health crisis.

This educational and interactive program will feature a panel including experts in the addiction treatment field, ethical prescribers, and those who have experienced an addiction to prescription drugs who have also been impacted by this national health crisis.

All are welcome. It is vital that we come together as a community and learn all we can about opioids, both prescribed (such as Vicodin) and illicit (such as heroin), and their potential for addiction.

Together we will:
• become informed health care consumers
• develop language we can use with prescribers
• understand who is vulnerable to opioid dependence
• break through the stigma that keeps people from seeking treatment
• address pain management
• hear real stories about opioid addiction and recovery

Register to attend: shiningalight-montco.eventbrite.com
How Many People Drink Alcohol?

- Alcohol consumption is more common than use of tobacco or any illicit drug, including marijuana. About a quarter of Americans try alcohol before age 18, and more than three-quarters of adults try alcohol by age 25.
WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

- Opioids are a class of drugs that includes the illegal drug heroin as well as power pain relievers available by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), codeine, morphine, fentanyl, methadone, and many others.
- Opioids bind to mu-opioid receptors on the nerve cells in the brain and body to reduce pain and suppress coughs when used legitimately, but can also cause intense euphoria or intense high that can lead to dependence and/or addiction, whether the drug ingested is heroin or a legally prescribed drug.
- The effects of opioids, particularly their rewarding, euphoric effects, are accentuated most when the drugs are delivered rapidly into the brain, thereby causing users “chasing the high” to snort or inject crushed prescription pills or heroin.
- Opioid overdose effects include severe depression of the respiratory system, potentially causing respiratory arrest, coma, and death. Opioid dependence and withdrawal is characterized by constricted nausea, mental confusion, drowsiness, severe sweats and constipation.
- Fentanyl, an opioid that is practically and effectively 50 and 100 times more potent than heroin or prescription opioids, is often used to adulterate heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other “street drugs.” Overdose deaths often result from a user’s unwitting purchase and use of fentanyl when believing he or she is purchasing heroin or prescription pills. Fentanyl derivatives such as carfentanil, which is used to anesthetize elephants, is also being used to adulterate heroin, causing cluster overdose deaths.
- Discussion of opioid prevention, treatment, enforcement, and deterrence in your community should address illicit drugs and prescription drugs, as opioids in all forms are present across the nation.

THE COLD, HARD TRUTH:

- On an average day:
  - At least 78 people will die from an opioid-related overdose, and according to public health reports from the field, the 2016 overdose death statistics will far outnumber the 50–78-deaths-per-day statistic of 2014.
  - 3,900 people will use a prescription opioid outside of legitimate medical purposes and supervision. These prescription drugs are many times obtained through theft, fraud, or otherwise diverted from people with legitimate, medically-appropriate prescriptions.
  - 580 people will try heroin for the first time.
- Heroin overdoses have increased 244% between 2007 and 2013. Many of the new heroin users are youths, with an average age of 24½ years old for first-time users.
- The change in heroin administration routes to pill form, coupled with the rise of counterfeit pills often containing heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl derivatives, has caused unwitting users who purchase drugs on the street to overdose and die in record numbers.

THE FALLACY OF HEROIN:

- No longer restricted to the stereotypical “dirty needles” used in an alleyway, heroin has invaded rural towns and urban cities alike and does not discriminate among socio-economic lines, race, age, or gender.
- It can appear as a dark black gummy tar or a brown or white powder. Many times, the dark black or brown powder heroin carries a strong vinegar smell.
- Heroin in powder form can be injected, smoked, or inhaled. The drug is also made into counterfeit pills, tablets, and gel capsules, which can be swallowed or crushed and chewed.

FENTANYL

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid. Fentanyl is 80-100 times more powerful than morphine, the substance to which heroin metabolizes, and is commonly used as an end of life sedative or during operational anesthesia.
- Fentanyl has historically been marketed for end-stage cancer treatment and applied via patches on the skin. Illicit fentanyl now appears in powder form, and is often visually indistinguishable by law enforcement.
- Fentanyl appears in counterfeit tablets, pills, and gel capsules attempting to mimic certain prescription drugs.
- Fentanyl powder has the power to kill with the ingestion, inhalation, or skin absorption of just two milligrams. By comparison, a sweetener packet found on a restaurant tabletop generally contains 1,000 milligrams per packet.
- Drug abusers, law enforcement officers, first responders, or family members who are unaware of its presence or lethality can be inadvertently exposed to fentanyl.
- Drug traffickers are now combining fentanyl or fentanyl-related compounds with other drugs to increase their potency and profit. Many unsuspecting drug abusers who are abusing cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, or other synthetic drugs have overdosed and died within days, hours, or minutes, of each other following the introduction into a community of fentanyl or heroin laced with fentanyl.

HOW DID THIS OPIOID PROBLEM GET TO MY COMMUNITY?

- Opioids, particularly diverted prescription drugs, often enter the community through the family medicine cabinet, theft and robbery of local pharmacies, and through fraudulent prescriptions.
- Heroin, fentanyl, and counterfeit prescriptions drugs are also sold by drug trafficking organizations and street gangs already operating in a community.
Additionally, many opioids can be purchased via the Internet; social media sites such as Facebook, Google, and Craigslist, among others; as well as a myriad of sites on the Dark Web. They are then shipped discreetly via commercial parcel delivery carriers such as the U.S. Post Office, FedEx, DHL, or UPS.

**WHAT IS BEING DONE TO CURB THIS EPIDEMIC?**
- The government at all levels: career public servants, law enforcement, and public health officials, have partnered with educators, treatment professionals, and non-profit organizations, to bring awareness and develop strategies and solutions for your community.
- Strategies include targeted and proactive drug law enforcement activity to dismantle the trafficking organizations; prevention programs and drug awareness and education campaigns; and intervention and treatment options that address the short and long-term health of addicts and recovering addicts.
- Countless local, tribal, and regional efforts, tailored to the specific needs of a community, are underway and supported by national and international efforts which focus on various parts of this problem.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**
- Have a meaningful conversation with your family. Reject the notion that “it can’t happen to you or your family.” Talk aloud about the threat opioid abuse brings to your family. Commit to asking the tough questions.
- Invest in your family and community’s future. Many intensely affected regions routinely host public forums, town halls, prevention activities at schools, community vigils, walks, and fun runs. Get involved and participate.
- Speak up. Contact law enforcement when you suspect drug-related activity in your neighborhood. Successful policing relies on a whole-community approach to identify and bring drug trafficking organizations to justice.
- Keep any prescription drugs in your house secure and locked away, out of reach of others.
- Take advantage of national or local take back days sponsored by law enforcement or your local pharmacy to discard any unneeded drugs.

**A FEW RESOURCES**
- Get Smart About Drugs, a DEA Resource for Parents, Educators, & Caregivers: [www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com](http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com)
- Just Think Twice, Get the Facts About Drugs: [www.justthinktwice.com](http://www.justthinktwice.com)
- Above The Influence: [www.abovetheinfluence.com](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

The Montgomery County Drug and Alcohol Prevention Project sponsored a Mock Teen Bedroom at Upper Merion High School on March 21st in partnership with the Upper Merion Police Department and CAST (Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow). Judy Hirsh from CAST is showing parents how hidden or ordinary items could be drug paraphernalia found in a teen’s bedroom.

**National Drug & Alcohol IQ Quiz**

Fentanyl is an especially dangerous drug because:
(choose one)

A. Many people are allergic to it.
B. Only a tiny bit can cause an overdose.
C. There is no way to reverse a fentanyl overdose.
D. It was developed for large animals.

(Answer below)

B. Only a tiny bit can cause an overdose. Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid pain reliever that is similar to the opioid morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent. This means it is cheap for drug dealers to add it to other drugs and sell on the street. Many people who use street drugs do not realize that fentanyl has been added to their drugs, and they take too much, leading to overdoses. In many cases, an opioid overdose can be reversed with the medication naloxone, if given quickly enough. You can read more about fentanyl here: https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl.
What are Peer Recovery Support Services? I hear this question frequently when I am talking to prospective volunteers about the opportunities they have with our organization. I answer that question by explaining a simple concept: a person with lived experience in recovery from a substance use disorder helping another.

I work for The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania Inc./PRO-ACT (Pennsylvania Recovery Organization – Achieving Community Together) as a Volunteer Coordinator. One of my roles is to recruit and train volunteers to run Peer Recovery Support Services (PRSS) in Montgomery County. There are many types of PRSS. Facilitating peer support groups is one type.

PRO-ACT has several free programs that are available to the community that support people in recovery such as our Woman’s Trauma Group, Men’s Group or Coping with Loss. PRO-ACT also has educational workshops including Credit Counseling or Gateway to Work, where people in recovery can get free help with resumes and strengthen their interview skills. Groups with a more holistic approach are also offered including Mindful Meditation, Yoga, Art for Recovery, and Recovery Journaling.

A popular and successful recovery support service we offer is a program called Adventures in Recovery. In this program, outdoor activities are explored to help people in recovery increase their social connectedness. Hiking, overnight camping, tubing, disc golf, bowling, ice skating, and horseback riding are some of the adventures we go on. These adventures show people that recovery is fun and possible! All groups, events, and mentoring possibilities are run by peer volunteers and staff with a common goal: to help people initiate and sustain long term recovery from substance use disorder.

I often share my own personal story of how PRSS saved my life. I am a person in long term recovery and what that means to me is I have been substance free since October of 2010. My life has completely changed from that point to where I am now. I have struggled with substance and alcohol use for years. I have been to several treatment facilities, institutions, and jails which only gave me temporary external motivation to stop my substance use. I couldn’t stay abstinent this way.

This last time, I had mentors from PRO-ACT come meet with me and begin PRSS. Here I was able to find internal motivation for recovery. At the time, I didn’t know what PRSS were. I just knew they were a couple of guys I could relate to because they had been through the same things I had. These mentors helped me with a recovery plan. They had me take a look at every domain of my life including where I was working, where I was living, relationships, transportation, and recovery support. Part of my recovery plan was to attend PRO-ACT events and groups. Once I attended as a participant, that led to volunteer opportunities and eventually working full-time for The Council and PRO-ACT.

If it weren’t for that initiation and engagement into PRSS, I believe I would have repeated the same old patterns. PRSS literally saved my life. I am completely engaged in recovery in all aspects of my life and it is a wonderful life. I have PRSS and PRO-ACT to thank for that. I encourage anyone who is struggling with their recovery to get involved with PRSS and reach out to our office in Norristown. Our office is located at 622 Swede St. Norristown, PA and you can reach us by phone at 484-383-0802. We are here to help!
Please try to make visiting the DDAP training website a routine part of your work life.

The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) has a coordinated online registration system for their sponsored trainings called the Training Management System (TMS). In order to attend a DDAP sponsored training you are required to register your information with system and create a user profile. Once a profile is created, users can search and register for Onsite, Mini-Regional, or Specialized trainings by clicking on the “Course Search” option on the left-side menu. Courses can be searched by title, type, trainer, region or date. Some trainings allow for self-registration while others will direct individuals to contact the training site host. Please be advised some trainings will have a fee attached. The host site is responsible for collecting any fees associated with a DDAP training.

DDAP Disclaimer: Once you are registered for a course, if you are unable to attend then you MUST cancel your registration or you will be charged a $50 No Show fee and will not be able to register for future trainings until the fee is paid. To cancel a course, select the “Cancel Registration” link in the left navigation panel, choose the course name and follow the prompts.

The Training Management System (TMS) can be accessed at https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/tms. If you need support with your TMS account, DDAP can be contacted at (717) 736-7452 or RA-DATRAINING@pa.gov.

Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission (BCDAC)

Co-Occurring Psychiatric & Substance Use: An Overview
Tuesday, April 30, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  $15.00 Fee

Case Management Overview
Thursday, May 9, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  $15.00 Fee

To register, please contact Margie Rivera at 215-773-9313 or email at mcrivera@buckscounty.org

The trainings will be held at:
600 Louis Drive, Suite 102A, Warminster, PA 18974

Lehigh Valley Government Center

Where is God in All of This
Tuesday, May 7, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  $10.00 Fee

To register, please contact Victoria Rose at 610-782-3555 or email at Victoriarose@lehighcounty.org

The training will be held at:
17 S. 17th Street, Allentown, PA 18101

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Case Management Overview
Wednesday, May 22, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

Confidentiality
Wednesday, May 22, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

Opiate Abuse/Addiction
Wednesday, May 22, 2019  9:00am - 12:00pm  No Fee

Screening & Assessment
Wednesday, May 22, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

Please register using the Self Registration via Training Management System

The trainings will be held at:
100 Four Falls Corporate Center, Conshohocken, PA 19428

Northampton County Human Services

Do you Hear What I Hear: Effective Lessons in Effective Communication
Saturday, May 4, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

Peer-based Recovery Support Services
Saturday, May 11, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

Prevention 101 - Part 1: Mastering the Basics
Monday, May 20, 2019  9:00am - 12:00pm  No Fee

Prevention 101 - Part 2: Case Study and Application
Tuesday, May 21, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

To register, please contact Kathleen Dilts at 610-829-4500 or email at kdilts@northamptoncounty.org

The trainings will be held at:
2801 Emrick Boulevard, Bethlehem, PA 18020

Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs

Confidentiality
Monday, May 20, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

To register, please contact Jessica Morriston at 717-736-7452 or email at ra-dat raining@pa.gov

Standards Applications Workshop (DDAP Licensing Training)
Tuesday, May 14, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  No Fee

To register, please contact Nancy Buczeskie at 717-706-1040 or email at nbuczeskie@pa.gov

The trainings will be held at:
2601 N. 3rd Street, One Penn Center 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17110

Valley Forge Medical Center

Advanced Group Therapy
Tuesday, June 4, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  $20.00 Fee

Woman and Addiction
Tuesday, June 25, 2019  9:00am - 4:00pm  $20.00 Fee

To register, please contact Monique Harding at 610-539-8500
The trainings will be held at:
1033 W. Germantown Pike, Norristown, PA 19403
Did you know... There is quite a bit of useful information on the Montgomery County Drug and Alcohol website? Information on the site includes:

- Support Group Websites and Meetings (AA, NA, Al-Anon, etc.)
- The State and Federal Agencies for Substance Abuse Services.
- Apply for Medical Assistance On-Line.
- PRO-ACT Ambassadors for Recovery, and more…

Check it out!  
http://www.montcopa.org/drugandalcohol

WEB SITE INFORMATION

GET THE FACTS!

What is an addiction?

Not everyone who uses drugs becomes addicted. Each person's body and brain are different. People react to drugs differently. There's no rule about how soon someone becomes addicted. It can happen quickly or take time.

People don't plan to get addicted to drugs. When people first take a drug, they might like how it makes them feel. They believe they can control how much and how often they take the drug. But drugs can take away people's control. Drugs can change the brain.

At first, the drugs might make you feel good. But after time you might need to take the drug just to feel normal. You might start taking more just to get the same high. You might keep using the drug, even though it starts hurting your life. You might spend a lot of time trying to get more of the drug. Seeking and using drugs might start hurting your loved ones, but you can't stop. These are signs of an addiction.

An addiction can take over your life. Taking drugs can become more important than the need to eat or sleep. Getting and using drugs can become all you think about. The addiction can replace all the things you used to enjoy. You might do almost anything to keep taking the drug, like steal or lie.

An addiction is a brain disorder.

- Drugs can change how the brain works.
- The brain changes can last for a long time.

The changes can cause problems with a person's behavior. People with a drug addiction might be moody, have memory loss, or even have trouble thinking and making decisions.

An addiction is an illness, just as heart disease and cancer are illnesses. An addiction is not a weakness. It does not mean someone is a bad person. People from all backgrounds can get an addiction. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor. It doesn't matter where you live. It doesn't matter if you went to college or not. An addiction can happen to anyone and at any age. But the chances are higher when a person starts using drugs when they're young.

Read more about other things that make someone more likely to become addicted on the Easy-to-Read Drug Facts webpage, What Makes Someone More Likely to Get Addicted?

“IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT'S DONE.”  
- Nelson Mandela
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Drug & Alcohol
1430 DeKalb Street - PO Box 311

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“HELP STARTS HERE”

Mission Statement: The Montgomery County Office of Drug & Alcohol is committed to the prevention and treatment of substance abuse in Montgomery County. Services are delivered in a partnership with qualified Providers and guided by a philosophy that imparts hope, respect and support for recovery.

“The Connection” is sponsored by:
Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol
Montgomery County Human Services Center
1430 DeKalb Street, PO Box 311
Norristown, PA 19404 - 0311

For more information or to be placed on the mailing list for this newsletter contact: Darnice Stephens at dstephe2@montcopa.org or call 610-278-3642.

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RESOURCES

Al-Anon Family Groups
(1-800-344-2666) or (1-800-356-9996)
www.al-anon.alateen.org

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
(215-923-7900)
www.aa.org

SEPIA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Intergroup Association of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS)
(215-923-7900)
www.aasepia.org

PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
(717-783-8200)
www.ddap.pa.gov

PA Problem Gambling
(1-877-565-2112)
www.PAproblemgambling.com

Nar-Anon Family Groups
(Support for families of drug abusers)
(1-800-477-6291)
(1-855-NAR-ANON (627-2666) (Hot-Line)
www.nar-anon.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
(844-624-3575)
www.eparna.org

SAMHSA
(1-800-729-6686)
(1-877-726-4727)
http://www.samhsa.gov/

National Institute on Drug Abuse
(301-443-1124)
www.drugabuse.gov/

PA Public Health & Addictions Info Clearinghouse
(1-877-724-3258) (Option 0)
https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/clearinghouse/

Pennsylvania Certification Board (PCB)
(717-540-4455)
https://www.pacertboard.org

PRO-ACT (Ambassadors for Recovery)
The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc.
(215-345-6644) for referrals (1-800-221-6333)
https://www.councilsepa.org/programs/pro-act

Spring 2019