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Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Coalition

An update from

news



December 2019, Volume XXXIV, Number 4

Invisible Crises: Vaping and Alcohol Misuse



Approximately 70 Northern Berkshire residents attended nbCC's November forum on vaping and alcohol misuse in our community

Our November forum focused on the hidden crises of vaping and alcohol misuse in North Berkshire. While opioid addiction is often front and center in conversations about addiction, alcohol and nicotine are legal addictive substances that have a huge impact on community health. This forum allowed the opportunity for a deeper dive into their use and public health impacts on adults in the community.

Joyce Brewer made an informative presentation about vaping. She is the Tobacco Free Community Partner Program Manager at Berkshire Area Health Education Collaborative (AHEC). Joyce works around the county to provide community education about tobacco use and prevention. Joyce offered the most recent data on the epidemic of vaping related illnesses in the United States and Massachusetts. Over 2,000 people across the country have been sickened, and at least 30 have been killed due to severe respiratory illness linked to vaping. To date, 68 cases have been reported in Massachusetts with three deaths.

While vaping has been widely perceived as harmless, and as a safe way to step away from cigarette smoking, neither of these are true. In fact, vaping has not been shown to be a smoking cessation device. Inhaling the aerosol vapor produced by vaping, people are taking chemicals into their lungs that can include volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, ultrafine particles, and unknown carcinogens. The contents of vaping liquids

are not FDA approved. Furthermore, just because a vaping juice says it is free of nicotine, it may still contain it. Young people who think they are just vaping flavored juices may get addicted even if trying to avoid nicotine.

The Massachusetts legislature has raised the age of legal sale to 21, and imposed restrictions on sale of flavors, and more.

People who want to stop vaping or smoking should contact their doctor and can call the Massachusetts Smokers Quit Line at 1-800 QUIT-NOW (<http://makesmokinghistory.org/quit-now/>).

The alcohol discussion began with a survey asking forum participants how big a problem they think alcohol use is in our community. Only a handful of people said a "10". nbCC Prevention and Recovery Associate Susan Cross, introduced the discussion of alcohol by sharing data that showed more and more people are dying as a result of alcohol misuse than from opioid overdose. Susan demonstrated what a serving size of alcohol looks like- it's a lot less than many people think, and it varies depending on the alcohol content of the beer, wine, or liquor consumed. She also shared the limits on low risk alcohol use. For women, low risk drinking means staying below 3 drinks on any given day, and 7 drinks in a week. For men, it means staying below 4 drinks on any given day and 14 in a week.

Barb Reeves, nurse and BRCC member who is in recovery from alcohol misuse, presented information on the long term

health effects of risky alcohol use. It was a very long list including heart disease, liver disease, high blood pressure, dementia, and cancer, not to mention mental health problems, social problems, and addiction. She also shared compelling data from Berkshire Health System (BHS) showing that almost 70% of discharges from McGee Detox are for alcohol as the primary substance, and 30% from opioids.

During the discussion, John Crane from The Brien Center told the group about the new recovery home that will be opening on Arnold Street in North Adams for people with co-occurring disorders (mental illness and substance use disorder). Andrew Walak, a program supervisor for addiction treatment at BHS told the group that CSS is available to anyone with a substance use disorder who needs support. Brien Center staff also told the group that alcohol is the only detox that can actually be fatal. Local EMS paramedic Stephen Murray said he has alcohol related calls on pretty much every shift, unlike opioids, and that he has been in the homes of some of the most affluent on alcohol related calls. He said the social acceptance of alcohol means people may not reflect on its misuse as they should. nbCC Director Amber Besaw shared that serving alcohol at birthday parties for children is an example of how pervasive and accepted its use is in our community.

- Wendy Penner, Director of Prevention & Recovery



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Our Mission

“Empowering the Northern Berkshire region to enhance the quality of life through our efforts at connecting, convening, and supporting all facets of the community.”

In pursuit of this mission, we place particular emphasis on the following:

- Strengthening neighborhoods and community life
- Preventing alcohol/substance abuse and supporting recovery
- Promoting health and wellness
- Helping families to be strong and resilient
- Supporting positive youth development
- Building bridges between residents and service agencies

Coalition Supporters

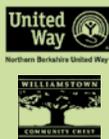
Public Sources

- MA Dept. of Children & Families/EOHHS
- MA Cultural Council
- MA Department of Public Health
- MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services
- Mass Service Alliance

Local Support

- Contributions from our many individual supporters

The Coalition is a member agency of the Northern Berkshire United Way and the Williamstown Community



To submit announcements to the *Coalition E-zine*:

The *Coalition E-zine* is a weekly e-blast published every Thursday and contains announcements from Northern Berkshire agencies and organizations. Submissions must be received by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday morning to be considered for inclusion in that week's issue. All submissions are subject to editing and should be 50 words or less. All events related to Northern Berkshire community public health will be considered for publication. Banner ads are available for your fundraising events. For more information, please call 663-7588, or to submit an announcement, please email phzine@nbccoalition.org.

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's Monthly Forum

Friday, December 13

10:00am - noon

First Congregational Church, 906 Main St., Williamstown
(please note location change)

A Conversation about Mental Health in the Community

This will be a completely conversational forum on the subject of mental health in the community.

Please bring your thoughts on:

- 1) How you define mental health and mental illness?
- 2) What are your experiences with mental health and mental illness in the community?
- 3) How do you manage and maintain your mental health?

We are looking for community members from all walks of life to join this important Coalition meeting. There will be an opportunity for introductions, brief announcements of your upcoming events, networking and a resource table available to display your flyers.

For more information, contact Amber Besaw at nbCC at (413) 663-7588.

Please bring a healthy non-perishable food item with you to the forum to benefit our local food pantry, The Al Nelson Friendship Center.

nbCC Begins Redirection Program Designed as an Alternative to Traditional Discipline

This summer, nbCC partnered with representatives from the Juvenile Probation office, Mt. Greylock Regional High School, and Hoosac Valley High School to create a program designed as an alternative to traditional discipline such as detention or suspension. The goal of this program is to address disciplinary actions from a strength-based approach. Utilizing an existing curriculum that is employed by nbCC's Youth Leadership Program staff, the program seeks to lead young people in efforts of self-exploration and discovery.

This program is utilized a little differently from one school to the next, but the goal remains to minimize the need for traditional discipline, and seeks to offer youth an opportunity for self reflection and conversation. These conversations have centered around goal setting and conflict resolution, but the beauty of utilizing such a robust curricu-

lum as the Teen Outreach Program model currently in use is the adaptability to each circumstance and each young person.

In an effort to reach not only the young person in question, but also the parents or guardians of that young person, we have designed this program to be attended by both youth and their caregivers. Thus far, 3 participants have attended the redirection program with their parents or guardians. Staff from nbCC's Family Resource Center are offering simultaneous workshops with the parents or guardians, while the student meets with a Youth Development staffer in a different room.

The program will continue to evolve and grow to meet the needs of youth in Northern Berkshire County, and the efforts of the school representatives and all of those involved will continue throughout this process.

-Tim Shiebler, Youth Development

THE NEIGHBORLIES



Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2019 Neighborlies! In addition to recognizing over 350 north Berkshire residents, the 2019 Volunteer of the Year award was presented to North Adams resident Enid Shields for her unwavering dedication to the North Adams community.

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Board of Directors 2019-2020

Sara LaLumia, President
Williams College

JEN CIVELLO, Vice President
Community Resident

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Christine Naughton
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Common Folk

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Fun for All at Family Fun Skate Day!

In November, nbCC's Family Resource Center and the City of North Adams collaborated to offer a free Family Fun Skate event for families who reside in north Berkshire. 164 people came out to skate with us! Snacks, hot chocolate and transportation were also provided for families. We would like to thank Culligan Water for donating their hot water cooler and jugs of water for hot chocolate, which was a huge success. Also a huge thank you to the City of North Adams for letting us utilize the rink for the day! Please keep this event in mind as we hope to have another successful family skate day during the winter break in February.

-Stephanie Puc, Family Support & Education Coordinator

nbCC Refocuses Prevention Work

We are excited to be reinvigorating our prevention work! Our efforts will focus on continuing the prevention media campaign targeting parents to speak to their kids by age 9. Look for new PSAs to come out soon with different community voices! We also plan to hold community meetings for parents to learn more about how to talk to their children about topics like sex, substance use, and mental health.

We have begun community stakeholder interviews to inform our youth development and prevention work, and they are progressing well! We are looking for adults and young people who have something to say about how to support the health and well being of youth in our region. You might be hearing from us! We will be continuing this conversation about youth and wellness at the next meeting of the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative on Monday, December 9 from 10-11 at nbCC. If you'd like to attend, contact Wendy Penner or Carrisa Sacherski at (413) 663-7588.

-Wendy Penner, Director of Prevention & Recovery

Updates from UNO

Join the UNO Community on Saturday, December 7th for a Chill Party. Hosted once again by the amazing youth of our After School Program, this year's winter-themed party will feature games, snacks, and everyone's favorite combination of both: Gingerbread houses! Keep cool with us between 1 and 3 in the afternoon, and get the holiday season started off right.

The following week, UNO is partnering with MASS MoCA for this year's installment of UNSilent Night on Thursday, December 12th. This avant-garde, participatory musical movement by Phil Kline has been all over the city in years past, and this year it's the UNO

Neighborhood's turn. Join us at 5:30 at UNO for some refreshments before we head out at 6 to meander through the neighborhood. The walk culminates at The Porches for hot chocolate. Dress warm, and be sure to stay tuned for more details!

Keeping with the Winter theme, the 4-H Wacky STEAMsters club at UNO is sponsoring a family friendly event with Berkshire Paint & Sip. On Saturday, December 14 bring the whole family to paint a snowman on slab or canvas at a discounted price of \$20 per person. Light refreshments will be provided. The event starts at 6pm with a presentation by our 4-H Ambassadors. Prior reservation is required. Call (413) 205-8346, or go to berkshirepaintandsip.com, to reserve seats.

-Matt Shiebler, Neighborhood Development

Youth Taking the Lead at the Neighborlies

Every year, nbCC organizes the Neighborlies, an award and recognition ceremony for those in Northern Berkshire who go above and beyond for their community. There are several categories, but I have the distinct pleasure



NAPD Captain Jason Wood, Misael Horsfall, and nbCC ED Amber Besaw.

of honing in on the younger award recipients of this

year's event. The category, aptly named "Youth Taking the Lead" is full of examples of local youth being good role models, active agents of change in their communities, and taking the lead to better the world around them. I thought it would be worthwhile to explore some of this year's recipients of the "Youth Taking the Lead" award.

First, there is Drury student Ryan Goodell. Ryan, inspired to bring a little brightness and joy to his community, started what he is calling "random acts of Ryness" at Drury. Ryan wasn't asked to do this. He didn't get extra credit. He simply wanted to brighten up the days of his peers.

Another great example of youth taking the lead comes from Piper Jacobs. Piper took the initiative to create something that could be enjoyed by her community, and raise awareness about an important issue. The result was the "Bee Yourself" festival, held at the UNO community center. Not many people can boast that they created and organized a festival, never mind that they did so before the age of 18!

Then there's Misael Horsfall, who acted as a role model to peers by wearing a helmet on his bike. Vincent Miksic helped a neighbor search for a missing cat in a manner that was described as "relentless". Hope Motta taught other youth "Stop the Bleed" protocol through the 4-H club. The list goes on, and each of these young people deserves this recognition and more for their efforts to inspire, teach, and make their communities better.

If you see youth taking the lead in their communities, going above and beyond as neighbors and peers, or in any other way improving their community or the lives of those around them, submit their name for a neighborly at nbccoalition.org/the-neighborlies.html.

-Tim Shiebler, Youth Development

Bike Safety in the Greylock Valley Neighborhood

Jen Munoz, Growing Healthy Gardens Program Director, works with the residents of Greylock Valley Apartments on a community garden for the neighborhood. In doing so she realized how many children are riding bicycles and scooters with no helmets. This triggered something that was close to home for Jen and the desire to help these children get access to helmets. Jen reached out to Amanda and Glenda wondering the best way to make this happen. Holding true to the mission of nbCC, the response was to connect, collaborate and empower to enhance the quality of life.

nbCC staff worked collaboratively to organize Family Bike Night at Greylock Valley Apartments. Partners included in this event were The Spoke, Jen Munoz and Family, the Purple Bike Coalition, North Adams Housing Authority, the North Adams Police Department and bike collective volunteers. With a generous donation from Jen Munoz's family, 30 helmets were purchased locally and 21 helmets were given away to youth. There were 3 youth that had no interest in wearing a helmet, yet as the event went on and all of the kiddos and adults were wearing helmets, this caused these youth to eventually change their minds and by the end of the event all 3 received, decorated and were wearing helmets. There were 40 people that attended and participated in the event.

Also through the donation of Jen Munoz's family as well, a gentleman that lives in the neighborhood who is the go-to person that youth go to if they need bike repairs, received a new bike pump and chain lubrication. There was a bike rodeo and a neighborhood ride that attendees participated in as well.

This event was a great blend for nbCC's areas of work to collaborate and connect with neighborhood families to encourage health and wellness. It was a great opportunity to promote bicycle safety as we continue to shift and grow bike culture.

Following the event, we heard from some folks who attended:

"The bike helmets were amazing, the people fitting helmets and fixing the bikes were a huge hit, the options for decorating helmets



and bikes were fun, and kids got to show off a bit during the bike rodeo and the neighborhood bike parade. Even the weather cooperated!

I believe that this event has succeeded in normalizing helmet use, at least for some of the folks who attended. I thank all of you for helping me find a way to keep kids in our community safer!"

-With gratitude, Jen Munoz :)

"Yes, it was a great success, and I was happy to be a part of it. It was great having so many bike groups working together, with us, the nbCC Collective, Nellie and Hannah from Williams College, and Paul and Heidi from the Spoke, plus neighborhood people helping out and everyone from NBCC. Kids went away with replaced brake and shift cables, adjusted headsets, proper air pressure in their tires, and lubed chains, not to mention the new helmets."

- Tony Pisano- bike collective volunteer

-Amanda Chilson, Health and Wellness Coordinator

You have probably seen the new trees planted around North Adams! Bret and his crew of tree steward volunteers have worked hard this year, planting over 230 trees. This work was featured in the November 2019 edition of The Citizen Forester, a newsletter of the Urban & Community Forestry Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation! Many thanks to Bret and our tree stewards for their dedication. Join us again in the spring when we will continue the plantings!

Growing Greener – in North Adams

The streets of North Adams have gotten greener this year. The city is in the second planting season of a three-year grant to plant 800 trees. The grant, "Grassroots Tree Planting in Three Small Low-Income Cities within Rural Massachusetts" is funded through the USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration program and is being administered by the Franklin Land Trust. The grant has goals of increasing tree canopy in the three communities (North Adams, Greenfield, and Montague) and developing networks of volunteers who plant and care for trees.

In North Adams, Bret Beattie, of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, has been spearheading the planting in North Adams. This past spring, Bret was responsible for planting 134 trees in North Adams. To water trees over the summer, Bret adapted a bicycle trailer to carry hose and other materials for watering trees and had a volunteer help with the watering. This fall, Bret is continuing to plant trees in North Adams.



Bret with the watering trailer.



THE CITIZEN FORESTER

Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation

Holiday on a Budget Workshop at UNO



Everyone had a fantastic time at the Holiday on a Budget Workshop organized by nbCC's Family Resource Center. It started with a demonstration on how to cook a turkey dinner, appetizers and dessert and ended with the group sitting down and enjoying the meal. Everyone received a recipe book with recipes of what was prepared along with ideas for leftovers.

A Busy Fall for the Al Nelson Friendship Center

October was the busiest month so far this year at the Al Nelson Friendship Center. The food pantry served an average of 133 households per week on five Wednesdays. This is up from an average of 121 household visits last October.

Our rides-home program gave a whopping 156 rides home for our pantry friends.

Every year we prepare a fundraising letter, which is being sent out. If you want to donate financially and aren't on our mailing list, you can do so at our new website: <https://friendshipfoodpantry.org/give-help>

This year, both Christmas and New Year's fall on Wednesdays. Instead, we plan to open the food pantry on Tuesday, December 24, with one session from 10 am to 4 pm and on Thursday, January 2, we will open normal hours, 10 am to 2 pm and 3:30 to 5:30 pm.

-Mark Rondeau, Friendship Center

Beyond Wheat - Baking With Alternative Flours

Tuesday, December 3, 5 to 6:00pm
UNO Community Center, 157 River St., North Adams

Learn the basics of baking with flours other than white and wheat. Delicious samples available! Workshop led by Erin Merrigan, local baker. Please RSVP by contacting Bret Beattie at (413) 663-7588, ext. 28 or bbeattie@nbccoalition.org.

Positive Discipline for Toddlers Workshop

Thursday, December 5, 10:30 to 11:30 am
nbCC Conf. Rm., 61 Main St., Rm. 213, North Adams.

For parents with children ages 2 to 4. This workshop will present age appropriate positive discipline techniques for toddlers that can help parents be more effective without resorting to shaking, shouting or spanking. Real life scenarios feature actual parents handling common challenges with an initial harsh response, and then show the same situation handled with successful positive discipline techniques. To register, contact Stephanie Puc at (413) 663-7588. Transportation & childcare available upon request.

Tips for Managing Holiday Stress Workshop

Tuesday, December 10, 4:30-6pm
nbCC, 61 Main St., Rm. 208, North Adams

Discuss ways to check in with and manage stressful holiday emotions, learn grounding and coping skills for stress, plan for realistic goals and get support in setting and maintaining healthy boundaries. To register, contact Stephanie Puc at (413) 663-7588. Transportation & childcare available upon request.

Selecting Childcare for Your Baby Workshop

Thursday, December 12
10:30-11:30 am
nbCC Conf. Rm., 61 Main St., Rm. 213, North Adams

Get tips on how to choose a warm, loving and stimulating environment, how to make sure safety comes first and how to make an informed decision. To register, contact Stephanie Puc at (413) 663-7588. Transportation & childcare available upon request.

Monthly Forum: Mental Health in the Community

Friday, December 13
10:00am to noon
First Congregational Church in Williamstown

This forum will be completely conversational about the subject of mental health in the community. The first half of the forum will be devoted to introductions and announcements and please bring your flyers for distribution. For more information, contact Amber Besaw at nbCC at (413) 663-7588. Please bring a healthy non-perishable food item with you to the forum to benefit our local food pantry, The Al Nelson Friendship Center.

nbCC Bike Collective Open Hours

Monday, December 16
4:30-6:30pm

The Armory, 206 Ashland St., North Adams (look for the garage doors in the back)

Bring your own bike or work on a bike at the bike collective. You'll have the opportunity to learn from other community members on basic bike fixes, or team up with more experienced bike mechanics to rebuild a bike. Tools and stands are provided. All residents from Northern Berkshire are welcome! For more info, call Bret Beattie or Amanda Chilson at (413) 663-7588.

Movement Maintenance WOW Workshop

Tuesday, December 17, 5-6:00 pm
Berkshire Strength (formerly Berkshire Kettlebells) located in the NORAD Mill at 60 Roberts Drive, North Adams. Enter around the back of the mill and follow signs.

Learn simple strategies for a lifetime of better movement. No experience necessary. RSVP by contacting Bret Beattie at (413) 663-7588, ext. 28 or bbeattie@nbccoalition.org.

nbCC Meet and Greet for Adams Residents

Wednesday, December 18
12:00 to 1:00pm

The Daily Grind, 37 Park St., Adams
The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition would like to get to know the residents of Adams better and hear about their concerns and interests! Stop in and chat with some of the friendly nbCC staff! No brochures, no flyers, just talk! Join Us!

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Tuesdays, December 3 & 17
5:30-7:30pm
The Family Place, 61 Main St., Suite 208, North Adams.
This is a group for grandparents who are actively parenting their grandchildren giving them a safe and confidential space to share similar experiences with other grandparents. For more info, call (413) 663-7588.

Youth Leadership Program

Tuesdays in December
5:00 to 7:00pm
nbCC Conference Room, 61 Main Street, North Adams
UNITY staff engage local teens in a wide variety of exercises related to leadership skills such as communication, problem-solving, team work, identifying community needs, and project/event planning. For more information, email Tim Shiebler at tshiebler@nbccoalition.org or call the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition at (413) 663-7588.

Beacon Recovery Community Center Open Hours

Tuesdays from 5-7:00pm
Wednesdays from 10am - 2:00pm

The Beacon Recovery Community Center is a program of Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (nbCC) to provide peer support to those seeking recovery from addiction. BRCC is a peer led effort that provides support groups, connections to networks that can assist anyone seeking recovery, and opportunities to socialize with others. The community center is free and open to all. For more info, please Susan at scross@nbccoalition.org or call 413-663-7588.

nbCC's Teen Writing Workshop

Wednesdays, 5:00 to 7:00pm
nbCC Conference Room, 61 Main Street, North Adams

An afterschool writing program for teens of all writing experiences. Teens will hone in on their skill with professional local writers and peers. For more information, call Tim at the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition at (413) 663-7588.

UNO Open Hours

Weds and Thurs, 9am - 12pm, Fridays 12pm - 4pm
UNO Community Center, 157 River St., North Adams

Come to the UNO Community Center to meet members of our Steering Committee, learn about our programs and events, and get to know your neighbors. The coffee will be hot and the snacks will be on display! Come in and say hi. For more information, contact Matt at (413) 664-4612, or mshiebler@nbccoalition.org.

After School Program

Tuesdays, 6:30 - 7:30, Thursdays 4 - 5
UNO Community Center, 157 River St
Stop by the UNO Community Center for some homework help, structured/unstructured activities and fun in general with Greylock Elementary's own Mary Jirkovsky, aka Ms. J. For more information, contact Matt at (413) 664-4612, or mshiebler@nbccoalition.org.

4-H Wacky STEAMsters Club

December 10 & 24, 4 - 5:30pm
UNO Community Center, 157 River St

The 4-H Wacky STEAMsters are a fun filled STEAM group (ages 5-18). We tackle it all! From physics, to beadmaking, to breaking down scientific principles with fun, user-friendly, hands-on experiments. Healthy snacks provided. Parents are welcomed and encouraged! No drop off hours available. Option to register as an official member of 4-H and participate in other local groups and events. For more information, contact Matt at (413) 664-4612, or mshiebler@nbccoalition.org.



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nbCC is supported by:



A Note from the Director. . .

Happy Holidays! Another year is passing on and we are about to embark on the year ahead. For me, this is a time of reflection and a time for hope. So many challenges experienced and lessons learned by us all this past year. Each of these challenges and lessons lead us to the hope that we can all be a little bit kinder, a little more thoughtful, and a bit more neighborly to others.

As we close out 2019 and prepare for 2020, I want each of us to think about the hope in what lies ahead, a small change can make all the difference in our community.

“Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person.” -Mr. Rogers

Join us for our monthly forum
Friday, December 13 from 10am to noon.
A Conversation: Mental Health
in the Community
See page 2 for date, time, and location.
All are welcome! Please bring a friend and a non-perishable food
item with you to benefit The Friendship Center Food Pantry.

Find this newsletter
online at www.nbccoalition.org

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
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