

# HEALTHY SUSSEX QUARTERLY

Coming Together for a Healthy Sussex County | November 2023

## SAVING LIVES: A Community's Fight Against Drug Abuse



### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the Executive Director of the Sussex County Health Coalition, I've witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of drug use and abuse in our community. I've seen the statistics in the headlines, and most importantly, I've known people who have

been deeply affected by this crisis. It's not just numbers on a page; it's lives, families, and futures torn apart.

### Overdose deaths during the second quarter of 2023 compared to first quarter.

The number of overdose deaths during 2023 Q2 saw a decrease as compared to 2023 Q1.



of overdose deaths were from Fentanyl



3% reduction in the use of Naloxone

***YES, I CAN SAVE A LIFE!***

These numbers tell a story of progress, challenges, and the critical need for intervention. While we have seen a decrease in the overall number of overdose deaths, we must remain vigilant in addressing this issue across all counties and combat the presence of lethal substances like fentanyl.

### EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITY

The question that often plagues our efforts is this: why, despite pouring resources into addressing drug abuse, do the statistics remain stubbornly high? It's a multifaceted issue, but one aspect that isn't working as effectively as it should is our collective commitment to look out for one another. We need to create a culture where saving lives becomes second nature.

One crucial step in this direction is making Naloxone, the life-saving antidote for opioid overdoses, the easy and accessible choice for anyone who might witness an overdose. ***The saying, "Yes, I can save a life," should resonate with all of us. But how do we get people trained in using Naloxone?***

The discomfort surrounding this topic often keeps people from taking the initiative. But discomfort doesn't mean inability. We can empower individuals to overcome their fears and be willing to be trained in Naloxone administration, just as they would for CPR. Being ready and willing to help a fellow human being in a life-threatening situation is an act of profound compassion and courage.

### COMMUNITY-WIDE COMMITMENT

Whether you're a business owner, a concerned neighbor, a parent, or anyone in our community, and you want to get yourself or your fellow community members trained, please get in touch with us. We're here to assist and connect you

*(continued)*

**SCHC MISSION** *The Sussex County Health Coalition exists to engage the entire community in collaborative family-focused effort to improve the health of children, youth and families in Sussex County.*

**SCHC VISION** *We envision a community in which our citizens and institutions (public, private, and not-for-profit) are actively engaged in community health promotion as a shared community good, and working together to create a cultural and physical environment which supports healthy lifestyles for our children and their families.*

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with our providers to ensure you and your community are well-prepared to save lives in emergency situations. It's important to note that Delaware has a Good Samaritan law, which means that if you act in good faith to save a life, you cannot be sued or prosecuted.

This endeavor requires the collective effort of our entire community. While overdose deaths may not yet be on the decline, the number of rescues is steadily rising. More people are overdosing, but they are also being saved. We must be prepared as a community to look out for one another, to be the local heroes in our own backyard.

## THE HUMAN ANGLE

The human angle is crucial in this fight. We all know or have known someone who has struggled with addiction and has faced the horrors of fentanyl and the dangerous intermingling and mixing of prescription drugs with illicit substances. This is the harsh reality that countless families in Sussex County grapple with every day.

As part of our "Delaware Goes Purple" initiative, which focuses on the "Yes, I can Save a Life" message, we are taking proactive steps to combat the opioid crisis. We are striving to create a culture where every individual understands that they have the power to make a difference to save a life.

**In a world where uncertainty and fear often dominate the headlines, let us remember that within our community, we have the capacity to be the light in someone's darkest hour. Through training, awareness, and compassion, we can turn the tide against drug abuse and overdose. It's not just about statistics; it's about saving lives and preserving the hope and potential of every person in Sussex County. Together, we can be the change we wish to see in our community.**



Peggy M. Geisler, Executive Director



## QUARTERLY MEETING: Delaware Goes Purple Zac Clark Event



The annual Delaware Goes Purple Event and Quarterly Meeting held on November 16 was an extraordinary success as attendees gathered to celebrate the culmination of the purple season and pay tribute to community champions and organizations.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address delivered by renowned national speaker Zac Clark.

As the CEO of Release Recovery, a staunch mental health advocate, and a champion in the field of addiction recovery, Zac captivated the audience with his candid and inspiring story. Widely recognized for openly sharing his journey to recovery on ABC's "The Bachelorette," Zac has been an influential voice in raising awareness about mental health and addiction. Moreover, his ongoing commitment is reflected in his role on the board of trustees at Caron Treatment Centers, the very place where his own path to recovery commenced over a decade ago.

Shortly after his keynote session with SCHC constituents and community members, Zac made his way to the Milford Boys and Girls Club, where he shared his recovery story with 12-18-year-olds in their after-school programming.

The event was a remarkable testament to the impact of individuals like Zac and the vital conversations they ignite in our community.



# GUEST ARTICLE

## Joanna Champney

Director, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health;  
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services

### Addiction Action Committee Relaunches and Refines Focus Areas



The Addiction Action Committee (AAC) relaunched on October 4, with two new co-chairs named by the new Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary, Josette Manning. Co-Chairs Dr. Rebecca Walker (Deputy Director of the Division of Public Health) and

Joanna Champney (Director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health) convened the membership for the relaunch. Established under Title 16 of the Delaware Code, the purpose of the AAC is to develop and monitor a coordinated and comprehensive approach to Delaware's addiction epidemic.

**The AAC recommends and encourages comprehensive prevention, treatment, surveillance and monitoring strategies to evaluate and curtail the addiction epidemic in Delaware and will help to promote quality and accessible pain management for Delawareans.**

Voting members and public participants engaged in a robust discussion about subcommittees to be established to address pressing issues around addiction in Delaware. **Committees will include: Patient Centered Care, Harm Reduction, Addiction Treatment Services Subcommittee, Special Populations, Rural Health, and Primary Prevention.** There was special interest in ensuring that youth issues around substance use and the needs of marginalized and minoritized populations should be considered by the workgroups. The Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health at the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families briefly highlighted the absence of youth treatment services in Delaware and discussed a forthcoming report on youth treatment

provider capacity in Delaware. The importance of non-opioid pain management strategies was also discussed, as well as the need for more primary prevention and harm reduction activities.

The meeting included a presentation from the Department of State, which included a multi-year analysis by the Division of Professional Regulation of the number of clinical professionals licensed in the state of Delaware who may be involved in the care of individuals with substance use disorders. The largest increase by provider type was in nursing. Information about the annual number of controlled substance prescriptions issued by Delaware prescribers was also reviewed. The Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) monitors prescribing patterns and determines if increases warrant further investigation by the Department of Justice. The committee discussed that the data often needs interpretive knowledge, because some substances are not eligible for monthly prescription refills and this can make prescription rates appear artificially high.

Members of the public are invited to attend future AAC meetings (meetings are quarterly and are listed on the state's public meeting calendar) and may also join a subcommittee. **To receive meeting notices electronically and/or to participate in a subcommittee, please email [nsheriff@healthmanagement.com](mailto:nsheriff@healthmanagement.com).**

#### Quarterly Meetings in 2024 will be held on:

Wednesday, January 10 (3-5 pm)  
Wednesday, April 10 (3-5 pm)  
Wednesday, July 10 (3-5 pm)  
Wednesday, October 9 (3-5 pm)

# GUEST SPOTLIGHT

## Joshua Frank

Founder, Consequence of Habit

*“Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity.”* — James Clear, *Atomic Habits*.



The above quote is from James Clear’s book, *Atomic Habits*, and is at the heart of Consequence of Habit (CoH) mission:

**To empower individuals and the community by bringing awareness to the impact habits**

**have on our mental health, success, and the environment.**

The idea of CoH began in 2019 when the founder, Josh Frank (JT), came to a crossroads in his life. He had developed an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, and it was harming the most critical aspects of his life: his relationship with his family and, ultimately, his relationship with himself. Through personal reflection and the help of others, he got sober and began to look inwardly at all of the habits that were creating obstacles in his life. JT became fascinated with the power of habit building, both negative and positive, in relation to happiness and success.

JT’s lifestyle changes inspired him to create the Consequence of Habit podcast in 2020 to empower individuals and communities by bringing awareness to the impact habits have on mental health, success, and the environment. Since then, he has had the honor of interviewing a diverse range of guests, from high-ranking military officers to professional athletes to your seemingly average everyday person. The common thread in all of JT’s interviews is that his guests have made positive changes in their lives by looking inwardly, examining their habits, and making changes. JT has taken these lessons, pinpointed what worked, and incorporated them into something that benefits a broader audience.

In late 2020, Consequence of Habit Inc., a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, was created to help others establish habits to succeed and improve mental health. CoH provides an array of programs and resources designed to equip people with the knowledge and tools necessary to transform their lives positively. From addiction recovery support to workshops on goal setting and habit formation, Consequence of Habit tailors its services to meet the unique needs of those seeking change. Consequence of Habit is not limited to individual transformations; it is also committed to strengthening communities. Through partnerships with local organizations and businesses, the nonprofit promotes awareness of the consequences of habits and how they can impact collective well-being. This approach fosters a sense of unity and shared responsibility among community members.

As Consequence of Habit continues to grow and evolve, it envisions a future where its message of positive change and personal transformation reaches an even broader audience. The organization’s commitment to empowering individuals and communities remains unwavering, and its impact continues to expand.

Consequence of Habit serves as a testament to the power of change and the difference one nonprofit can make in the lives of countless individuals. Through their dedication to breaking the chains of destructive habits and promoting positive choices, they are a source of hope and inspiration for those seeking a brighter, more fulfilling future.



# COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AWARDS: Recognizing Excellence



**LATOYA HARRIS**  
Founder, Cornerstone  
Community Center



**TANA CONNELL**  
Assistant Professor MSW Program  
Director Department of Social  
Work, Delaware State University



**DR. ANNIE NORMAN**  
State Librarian, Delaware  
Division of Libraries



**We are thrilled to share that during our Quarterly Meeting on November 16, the Sussex County Health Coalition (SCHC) had the honor of presenting Community Champion Awards.**

These accolades are reserved for remarkable individuals and organizations who have made a profound impact on our community through their exceptional efforts. In this year's celebration, we recognized Latoya Harris from the Cornerstone Community Center for her tireless engagement in SCHC initiatives, and unwavering dedication to serving

the community. Furthermore, we extended our heartfelt appreciation to the Delaware Libraries for their invaluable partnership in promoting health initiatives, with special sub-awards to the Laurel and Bridgeville Libraries for their exceptional contributions. Last, but not least, we celebrated Delaware State University for its pivotal role as a dedicated and impactful community partner.

These awards stand as a testament to the outstanding contributions that have helped shape the well-being of our community in 2023!



## LT. GOVERNOR RECOGNIZES SCHC

We are delighted to announce that on October 25, the Sussex County Health Coalition (SCHC) was honored with the Lt. Governor's Challenge Wellness Leadership Award in the Delaware Health Leaders category for their outstanding **"Let's Get Healthy, Sussex!" campaign**. This Sussex County initiative, aimed to combat chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, has made a significant impact on the community. Presented by Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, this award reflects SCHC's commitment to making healthy choices easy and improving the well-being of Sussex County residents. Congratulations to SCHC for their well-deserved recognition and their positive impact on countless lives!

# SCHC Selected as a Sub-Grantee for “HEALTHY IN A SNAP” PROGRAM

The Sussex County Health Coalition has been selected to participate in Delaware’s SNAP-Ed “Healthy in a SNAP” program through a grant offered by Delaware Social Services and implemented by the University of Delaware.

**Sussex County Health Coalition is one of three sub-grantees that will be responsible for increasing awareness about the benefits of healthy eating, exercise and minimizing food insecurity in Delaware.**

The Food Bank of Delaware and Delaware State University were also awarded sub-grantee roles for the “Healthy in a Snap” program.

The “Healthy in a SNAP” program is focused on implementing targeted outreach strategies, including proactive marketing campaigns, collaboration with community organizations, and utilizing various communication channels to reach underserved populations. An emphasis on creating culturally diverse programming that is available and delivered in easily accessible locations will be a focus, as well as developing targeted educational initiatives specifically designed for adults ages 18–69. Additional emphasis will be centered on expanding the “Healthy in a SNAP” social media and website to provide comprehensive information on current SNAP-Ed programming and resources.

A long-time convener of non-profit organizations focused on education, health, and overall family wellness, SCHC’s role in this grant will center on creating a county-wide action plan that will support the needs in Sussex County with regards to nutrition security. The Coalition will work in tandem with the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension and designated Stakeholders to complete a SNAP-Ed landscape analysis addressing critical action items.

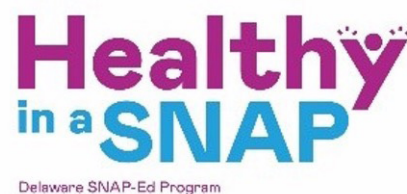
#### Those action items will include:

- 1. Gaining access to SNAP.**
- 2. Accessing barriers that currently hinder SNAP participation and utilization.**
- 3. Accessing service providers barriers and needs to gain increased enrollment and engagement of SNAP participants.**
- 4. Identifying current strength-based practices for scalability.**
- 5. Recommending pilots that can address barriers to engagement and increasing utilization/behavior change.**



SCHC is excited for the opportunity to provide these services in the form of strategic partner engagement, community, and landscape analysis. The grant work for the “Healthy in a SNAP” program will provide multiple entities (state and local) the ability to work collaboratively to gain valuable insights and ultimately enable culturally relevant and impactful nutrition education in Delaware.

For more information, please contact Cindy Parr at [cparr@pmgconsulting.net](mailto:cparr@pmgconsulting.net).



# GUEST ARTICLE

## Pallet Village

### Trish Hill

Project Manager, Springboard Collaborative



The Springboard Collaborative is a Delaware-based nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing homelessness through innovative solutions.

The Springboard Collaborative spearheaded the effort to create the Pallet Village in Georgetown.

**The Pallet Village supports individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Delaware that come from diverse backgrounds, including those grappling with mental health or substance use challenges and untreated health issues.**

Their daily lives are characterized by the constant struggle to secure food, clean water, and sanitation, all while enduring harsh weather conditions, from freezing winters to scorching summers.

Homelessness inflicts severe trauma, leading to feelings of fear, hopelessness, and isolation. Nevertheless, the Pallet Village believes in the nationwide evidence demonstrating the potential to empower disadvantaged individuals to build better lives with the right resources and opportunities.

The village provides shelter and wrap around care coordination for \$87 per day.

The Georgetown Pallet Village is a low barrier shelter, featuring forty individual sleeping cabins in a secure setting. Here, participants have access to comprehensive physical and mental healthcare, benefits navigation, comprehensive case management, job training, and other services, all facilitated by our coordinated care linkages.

What sets the Pallet Village apart is the inclusion of shared living spaces for partners, the accommodation of pets, and the provision of storage for possessions often lacking in traditional shelters. Each sleeping cabin includes heating,

air conditioning, comfortable bedding, and secure storage. Bathhouses are on site for shower and restroom access. Pallet Village is staffed 24/7 to ensure round-the-clock security. Cleaning supplies, food, and personal care items are readily available at no cost through the on-site store. Construction is underway to provide expanded on-site office space for staff, a dedicated dining area for meals, a commercial kitchen, and flexible meeting spaces.

The Pallet Village is a secure area that allows residents the freedom to come and go as they wish while safeguarding against unwanted intruders. The strategic relocation of participants from hazardous, unsheltered campsites to a safe village environment has streamlined access and reduced costs for partner agencies providing critical healthcare, justice reentry, and social services. The journey toward stability and self-sufficiency at the Pallet Village begins with the creation of individualized life plans with tangible milestones and metrics. At every step, Pallet Village navigators prioritize dignity, instill new competencies, and foster essential coping skills in a harm reduction approach, always with the utmost respect.



*Jennifer McErlane, who experienced homelessness for two years with her cat "Little Man," now finds herself living in the cabins. (Johnny Perez-Gonzalez/WHYY)*

# Thank You Purple Sponsors

*In this season of gratitude, we are thrilled to extend our heartfelt thanks to our esteemed sponsors, for their unwavering support of the Delaware Goes Purple campaign, and dedication to preventing substance-abuse disorder! Your involvement has been instrumental in reducing the stigma of drug abuse within our community. Your sponsorship has enabled us to make a significant impact in our efforts to educate, inform, and raise awareness about the critical issues surrounding SUD and it's complications. We thank you, and look forward to "going purple" with you next year!*

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