Heather’s Highlights

Dear Readers,

January’s forum highlighted the Grandparents’ Group of the North Quabbin Family Resource Center, a program of Valuing Our Children (members pictured below). Rick Barree, a long-time member of the group, did a tremendous presentation on the hidden costs both financial and emotional on “grandfamilies” impacted by the opioid crisis. His take on the preamble to the US Constitution helped to illustrate the tasks handed to grandparents in the position of raising grandchildren and the support needed.

The discussion led to open engagement of forum participants about how advocacy could move forward to help all families get the financial and resource support they deserve as they keep children in their known systems. Follow-up will be happening with the group as well as conversation with Congressman McGovern’s Office and other legislative avenues. Find more info on Valuing Our Children’s website at www.valuingourchildren.org or on their Facebook page.

Thank you for all you do,

Heather Bialecki-Canning
Executive Director

Next Coalition Forum:

February 21, 2020
9:00—10:30 am
Topic: NELCWIT (New England Learning Center for Women in Transition)

Orange American Legion
40 Daniel Shays Highway
Orange, Massachusetts

March Newsletter DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 25
Email details to admin@nqcc.org

Visit our comprehensive North Quabbin Area Community Calendar at nqcc.org/events.html

Like us on Facebook for regular updates!

NQCC
251 Exchange Street
Athol, MA 01331
978-249-3703
www.nqcc.org
info@nqcc.org
Our FY20 Donor/Members

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- Opioid Task Force
- Orange Lions Club
- Pioneer Junior Women’s Club
- David Runyan
- Jesse Sawin
- SMallet Photography
- Brent Walker
Loving Your Recovery

A free community event open to everyone!

- Saturday, February 15, 2020
  1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

- Athol Town Hall
  584 Main Street in Athol

Make your own valentines, enjoy food and entertainment, and have fun!

info@opioidtaskforce.org 413.775.7474 | RSVP not required

This event is part of a series of recovery events throughout 2020 to promote recovery focused activities in Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region.
CSO Wellness Program Groups

Bowling Party—February 6th—Meet at Clinic @ 9:30 am
Chronic Illness Support—Thursdays at 2:00 pm
Healthy Eating Group—Thursdays at 2:00 pm
Knitting and Crocheting—Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:00 am and Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:00 pm
Art Group—Fridays from 10:00 to 11:00 am
Mindful Movement for Women—Wednesdays from 9:00 to 9:45 pm
Peer Led Recovery Support Group—Mondays from 2:00 to 3:00 pm & Fridays from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
Job Search—Mondays from 3:15 to 4:15 pm
Wii Sports—Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 pm
Adult Game Group—Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:00 pm
Depression and Anxiety Support—Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
Early Recovery Group—Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:00 pm
Walking for Wellness—Tuesdays from 3:15 to 4:15 pm
MENders Support Group—4th Fridays (02/28) from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm
Movie Night—Last Thursdays (02/27) from 5:30 to 7:30 pm

VOC Happenings: Check Valuing Our Children’s calendar at www.valuingourchildren.org for info on parent education, support groups, parent-child activities, teen groups, and more.

Raising a Thinking Child

Fridays Feb. 28th - April 17th
3:30 – 5:30 pm
Ralph C. Mahar Regional School
507 South Main St Orange
(school library)
For parents of children ages 4 to 7 years. Learn skills to help your child resolve everyday conflicts and to get along with others.
- Improve Parenting Skills
- Improve Communication
- Improve Your Child’s Behavior
Childcare is provided. All children will receive a book after each session and dinner will be provided for all participants.
For more information or to sign up please call:
Jennifer: 978-249-8467

Sensory Play

Wednesdays February 5th
to March 18th 10:30 - 11:45
(No group Feb 19th)
Valuing Our Children’s Family Center 217 Walnut St. Athol

We will be exploring different foods and sharing tools on how to help your child with eating challenges. There will also be free play, sensory activities and social and emotional learning opportunities.

Registration is required. Space is limited. Please call Nicole: 978-249-8467
or email Ariella: aschwell@servicenet.org
Census Clinic Free English Classes
The Center for New Americans, a community-based education and resource center for immigrants and refugees in Western Massachusetts, is offering Census Clinic Free English Classes in Amherst (413-239-9550), Greenfield (413-772-0055), and Northampton (413-587-0084). Visit www.cnam.org for more information.

2020 Census FAQ
What is the census?
The census is a count of every person who lives in the United States and its territories. It happens every 10 years. In early 2020, you will be asked to count everyone who lives in your home as of April 1. Responding to the 2020 Census is a chance to shape your future.

What’s in it for me?
Your responses inform where over $675 billion is distributed each year to communities nationwide for clinics, schools, roads, and more. Census data gives community leaders vital information to make decisions about building community centers, opening businesses, and planning for the future. Responding also fulfills your civic duty because it’s mandated by the U.S. Constitution. The United States has counted its population every 10 years since 1790. Your responses are used to redraw legislative districts and determine the number of seats your state has in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Is my information safe?
Your responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by federal law. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics. They cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way—not by the FBI, not by the CIA, not by the DHS, and not by ICE.

When can I respond to the census?
In early 2020, every household in America will receive a notice to complete the census online, by phone, or by mail. In May, the U.S. Census Bureau will begin following up in person with households that have yet to respond.

What will I be asked?
You will be asked a few simple questions, like age, sex, and the number of people who live in your home, including children.

What won’t be asked?
The census will never ask for Social Security numbers, bank or credit card numbers, money or donations, or anything related to political parties.

For more information, visit: 2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future
START HERE >

United States Census 2020
How Fatherhood Helped Me Overcome Childhood Abuse and Trauma—By Mike Valliere, as featured in “Fatherly”

I had a miserable childhood defined by cruelty and pain. Now, I’m raising a happy girl and life feels substantively different.

Hailey arrived at 8:43 pm on April 3, 2014. At that moment, I knew I never wanted to be without her. I wanted things to be different for her than they were for me growing up. I wanted to keep her safe.

My birth father left when I was three. After that, my grandparents moved in with my mother, sister, and me. I didn’t feel safe in that house because I wasn’t. When my mother wasn’t home, my grandfather would come after my sister and me. My grandmother would intervene and take the beating for us when she could. Unsurprisingly, those experiences left a mark. I’ve struggled with mental health.

It surely doesn’t help that when I was roughly six-years-old, I was sexually abused by a neighbor across the street. He used to play with the neighborhood kids and unfortunately, I was not alone. That’s hard to read, but harder to live through. Also, hard to face. I suppressed the memory for years and became a quiet kid. When puberty hit, my behavior changed for the worse as memories returned with a vengeance. I became very angry and started acting out and breaking things.

After one incident in school, my anger overtook me, and I lost control. I was hospitalized and diagnosed with major depression. Even then, I didn’t open up about what happened to me because I was too ashamed.

Through most of my twenties and thirties, I struggled with depression, anxiety, rage, and suicidal thoughts. I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, major depression, and PTSD. Still, I wouldn’t get the help I needed. I just wanted the pain and my life to end.

That changed when I learned I was going to be a father. It’s not that I was able to fully let the past go, but I was forced to focus on the present and ensuring that my child would have a better outcome. I knew I couldn’t do that without help so I began taking my mental health seriously.

Not long after Hailey was born, her mother left, leaving me a single dad in a new town. I went to the local library looking for activities I could do with Hailey and learned about the family center, a program of the Children’s Trust. I started attending family center playgroups with Hailey and learned of the free parent education programs that they offered. I took the Nurturing Father’s program, a 16-week parenting education series to learn new and effective parenting techniques. I found it so helpful that I took every other program available.

Through these programs, I have learned invaluable parenting skills I take enormous pride in. I’m now confident handling adverse situations and I feel certain that I can keep Hailey safe. That confidence is bolstered by the fact that we have found the family I didn’t have growing up in playgroups and in support groups. I can’t express the importance of community support in our lives. I’m proud to say that the family center has helped me to become a great father.

Things will be different for Hailey. I will always be by her side to keep her safe and to keep her smiling. I’m determined to give Hailey a better life. I will and, in doing so, I suspect I’ll give myself one as well.

Mike Valliere lives in Orange, Massachusetts, where he is training to become a Community Health Worker. He is a community partner with the North Quabbin Community Coalition and the Recover Project, and is a full-time dad who loves spending time with his daughter doing anything that makes her smile.
Learn how to make choices to live a healthier life!

Join a Healthy Living Workshop Series

WINTER 2020 WORKSHOPS

Chronic Pain Self-Management
Saturdays | Feb. 22-March 28 | 10:00 am-1:00 pm
Recovery Project, 40 Federal Street, Greenfield, MA

Diabetes Self-Management
Wednesdays | March 4-April 8 | 1:30 pm-3:30 pm
Community Health Center of Franklin County
600 W River Street, Orange

A Matter Of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls
Thursday | Feb. 11-April 3 | 2:30 pm-3:30 pm
CFCI Main Street Center, 42 Main Street, Turners Falls

A Matter Of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls
Thursday | Feb. 11-April 3 | 2:30 pm-3:30 pm
CFCI Main Street Center, 42 Main Street, Turners Falls

My Life, My Health: Living Well with Long Term Health Conditions
Thursdays | Feb. 20-March 26 | 10:30 am-12:00 pm
LifePath, 10 Monroe Street, Greenfield

Workshops are free for participants and are open to people with one or more chronic health conditions as well as their caregivers and loved ones. For more information or to register for a workshop, call 413-773-5285 or email info@lifepathma.org. For a complete list and more details about upcoming workshops, visit LifepathMA.org. And stay tuned for next season’s offerings!

HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Providing interest-free, deferred payment loans to income-eligible homeowners to correct health and safety code deficiencies and to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Eligible Improvements could include:

- Electrical and plumbing upgrades
- Roof repair/replacement
- Structural repairs
- Accessibility modifications
- Lead paint abatement
- Septic repair/replacement
- Insulation & weatherization
- Heating and hot water system repair/replacement

For additional information, please contact Jen Morrow:
413-863-7781 x137 or email j.morrow@fhrma.org

This program is administered by the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority on behalf of the Towns of Enfield, New Salem, Orange, Warwick, and Wendell.

Infinite Love

20+ Local Vendors!
Flowers ~ Chocolates ~ Jewelry & other unique locally made gifts for your loved one! ONE STOP SHOPPING!

Kids Gift Workshop $15 **Register on EventBrite

Pottery Demo

Spa Services & Energy Healers

Saturday, February 8th 3-6pm

LaunchSpace@OIC
181 Main Street, Suite 342 Orange

For more information contact Brianna@LaunchSpace-Orange.com

The United Arc
for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

The United Arc & Greater Athol Area Advocates for Families with Special Needs proudly present

Coffee & Conversation
with your legislators from Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, & Worcester counties

Friday, March 6, 2020
8:30 am - 10:30 am
294 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

*Snow Date Friday, March 13, 2020

Join us for a conversation about inclusion, choice, and independence with your representatives. Featuring stories of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and advocates.

Be Counted - Census 2020

RSVP to Kara Caravagna by February 28, 2020
(413) 774-5390 x1103
kcaravagna@unitedarc.org
Please join us even if you cannot RSVP
Massachusetts’ New Tobacco Law—by Tina Grosowsky

A new tobacco law in Massachusetts is now in place and it affects where tobacco and vaping products can be sold. These changes are designed to reduce the youth vaping epidemic in Massachusetts and stop tobacco companies from targeting and addicting young people. The tobacco and vaping industries have long targeted youth, LGBTQ populations, and communities of color, resulting in terrible health consequences for the public.

Here’s a simple summary of how the law will change where and what tobacco and vaping products can be sold.

- The new law substantially restricts where e-cigarette and nicotine vaping products and flavored tobacco products can be purchased.
- Now all flavored e-cigarettes and nicotine vaping products can only be purchased for on-site consumption at licensed adult-only smoking bars in Massachusetts.
- Non-flavored nicotine products with a nicotine content of 35 milligrams per milliliter or less can continue to be purchased at stores licensed to sell tobacco products like convenience stores, gas stations, liquor stores, and bodegas.
- Non-flavored nicotine products with over 35 milligrams per milliliter of nicotine content can only be purchased at licensed, adult-only retail tobacco stores and smoking bars.
- Beginning on June 1, 2020, menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products like cigars and flavored chewing tobacco can only be purchased for on-site consumption at licensed, adult-only smoking bars.
- Also on June 1, 2020, the price of e-cigarettes and nicotine vaping products will increase because of the addition of a 75% excise tax on the wholesale price.

The new law substantially restricts the sale of flavored tobacco and nicotine products to protect youth since flavors, including mint and menthol, are a leading reason they start using them. Local Boards of Health have the authority to assure that the new law is being followed by retailers in their communities. For more information, visit mass.gov/NewTobaccoLaw.

Contact Tina Grosowsky at the Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership, tina.grosowsky@umassmed.edu or 508-856-5067 to learn more about how this new law will protect youth from tobacco addiction and fight the tobacco industry’s targeting of youth, LGBTQ, and communities of color with vaping products and menthol cigarettes.

Help for those who want to quit vaping, smoking, or using other tobacco products is available at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) and KeepTryingMA.org. Organizations that want to support people in quitting can contact Tina Grosowsky for information and guidance on simple strategies they can implement.

Athol Bird & Nature Club Events

Feb. 22 @ 6:15 pm: Birding the North Shore of MA Field Trip—Join club director Ernie LeBlanc on a trip to coastal Massachusetts for the wintering birds of Cape Ann, including gulls, alcids, and sea ducks. Meet at 6:15 am at MREC, 100 Main Street, Athol. Please call ahead to let us know you are attending. Bring snacks and EXTREME cold weather clothing! Contact Ernie at 978-249-4064 or lebroyal@aol.com.
Employment Opportunities

NELCWIT Contracts and Grants Manager — A salaried, exempt position scheduled for 40 hours per week, with occasional required weekend and evening hours for fund development activities. The Contracts and Grants Manager reports to the Co-Executive Director for Finance, Operations, and Administration. This position oversees all financial and compliance aspects of the agency's portfolio of grants, and interfaces with employees at all levels of the organization as well as contracted bookkeepers, funders, and vendors. For full position description, please see NELCWIT's website at http://www.nelcwit.org/employment.

Main Street Stage Company (MsSC) Seeks Talent

Main Street Stage Company (MsSC), Athol's local production studio, is currently casting talent and tech for its summer production of a filmed and staged work inspired by the 1990s movie, “The Commitments”. Are you a musician or performer in the North Quabbin Region or do you know someone who is? Do you know a homeschool or college student who plays an instrument? A garage band who wants to perform live for an audience? Or perhaps a retiree with an instrument that needs playing or a school group that would like to perform? Please let them know about this opportunity. For inquiries about the project contact msstageco@gmail.com.

Financial Strategies for Small Business

Starting a business? Growing your business? Need general business advice?

Tuesday, February 11th
5:30PM-7:30PM

Orange Innovation Center
131 West Main Street, 3rd Floor
Orange, MA

Meet and talk with area financial experts explaining and providing resources to small businesses and managers about resources available through traditional and non-traditional financial institutions. If you are interested in guidance and mentoring from local financial leaders, this event is for you!

The workshop begins with networking followed by a panel discussion. Panelists include Small Business Association (SBA), Common Capital, Area CDC, and Athol Credit Union.

Please RSVP by Friday, February 7th. Our registration link can be found on the Orange Innovation Center Facebook and website. Open to everyone.

For more information contact Brianna at brianna@orange-innovation.com or (978) 544-5957.

Overdose Prevention & Narcan Trainings

Free and open to all community members

2020 Winter Dates

WEDNESDAY, Feb 5, 2-3:30pm
Montague Catholic Social Ministries
41 3rd St, Turners Falls

MONDAY, March 16, 1-2:30pm
Athol Public Library
568 Main St, Athol

What is an opioid overdose?
How do you recognize and respond to an opioid overdose?
How do you administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose?

Please join us at an upcoming community overdose prevention training to learn how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose. Participants will also learn how to administer Narcan, a lifesaving opioid overdose reversal drug.

Questions? Info@opioidtaskforce.org
413.775.7474 | www.opioidtaskforce.org

TAPESTRY
Mission Statement: The North Quabbin Community Coalition is a community-wide alliance committed to improving the quality of life for all those living and working in the North Quabbin since 1984.

Coalition Regular Happenings

North Quabbin Recovery Center Hours
The North Quabbin Recovery Center at 416 Main Street, Athol, provides a compassionate, safe space to offer peer support to allow multiple paths of recovery for all. Open Tuesdays 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, Wednesdays & Thursdays 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, with All Recovery Meetings from 11:00 to 11:45 am and an All Recovery Meeting Fridays at 7:30 pm. 978-249-4989. All welcome.

Me FIRST (Finding Inspiration, Respect, Self-Love, and Tools)
Have you been considering putting yourself FIRST? Please join us as we develop a confidential group that offers support around balance, health, nutrition, self-care, fitness, and keeping a sense of humor through it all. Fourth Thursdays, 6:00 to 8:00 pm, at the North Quabbin Recovery Center, 416 Main Street, Athol. 978-249-3703. All welcome.

Legislator Happenings

Congressman James P. McGovern’s Athol Office Hours
Congressman McGovern has local office hours at the NQCC, 251 Exchange Street, Athol, on the third Friday of every month from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm to meet with constituents. To schedule an appointment or for more information, please contact Eladia Romero, Regional Manager at 978-466-3552.

Senator Jo Comerford’s Local Events
The People’s Office in Orange on February 21 at Quabbin Mediation, 13 South Main Street, Orange. District Director Elena Cohen will be holding regular office hours throughout the district. For the most up-to-date list of events, including bill hearings, please visit www.SenatorJoComerford.org/events.