Dear Readers,

January’s forum provided a presentation by the Community Health Center of Franklin County. Dr. Allie van der Velden and her team are doing amazing things to continue to serve our region and open their new location at the former Aubuchon Plaza on the Athol Orange line. More information can be found on their website at http://www.chcfc.org, and they are always available for questions, comments, and to hear your local voice!

Currently there is a focus on day to day operations as well as the distribution and prioritization of the COVID-19 vaccine, however, many plans are in the works for future expansion. Their community health worker program, dental program, primary care, as well as community collaborations remain among their top priorities as we enter 2021. They anticipate a full opening of the new site in February, so please stay tuned for details!

Thank you for all you do,

Heather Bialecki Canning
Executive Director
Our FY21 Donor/Members

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251 Exchange Street, Athol, MA  01331
978-249-3703 ~ info@nqcc.org
Our culture needs to rethink the many ways it glorifies overuse of alcohol

By David Sullivan and Laurie Loisel

New Year’s Eve has come and gone. Restrictions the pandemic forced on all our social lives led more people than ever to turn to television while counting down to 2021, which means more people than ever witnessed the CNN New Year’s Live show. While offering great entertainment, the show unfortunately provided a drunken spectacle that minimized – even glorified -- binge drinking and overuse of alcohol.

For years now, that show has featured news anchor Anderson Cooper egged on by co-host Andy Cohen who gets Anderson to drink increasing amounts of alcohol as the hours tick closer to midnight. Among other damaging messages, this suggests that alcohol is a necessary ingredient to letting loose and having fun. Television personalities, especially people who anchor news shows, are trusted figures and role models. This behavior is not something we want other adults, and certainly not teenagers, to emulate.

Peer pressure and misguided efforts to fit in are among the reasons young people begin drinking when their brains are still developing, and because their brains are still developing, they are vulnerable to the impact of substances in a way that the adult brain simply is not.

As the pandemic wears on, increasingly there are a seemingly endless stream of meme suggesting alcohol as a way to cope with stress and isolation. While these may be jokes, they send out a damaging message that influences our young people: substance use is the way to cope with difficult times.

The toll excessive alcohol use takes on our nation is nothing to joke about. Some 37 million adults binge drink once a week, according to the Centers for Disease Control, which the CDC defines as is seven or more drinks. The CDC attributes 95,000 deaths a year to excessive alcohol use. One in every ten deaths annually in our country is attributed to overuse of alcohol.

The National Institutes of Health reports that 14 million adults in the United States suffer from alcohol use disorder and 414,000 youth between 12-17 suffer from alcohol use disorder alcohol-related driving crashes led to 9,967 motor vehicle fatalities in 2014, according to the NIH.

The consequences of youth alcohol (and other substances) consumption are even more devastating because substance use while the brain is still developing can alter the pathways in the brain to such a degree that it can lead to life-long addiction issues.

Much has been reported in recent months about the pandemic’s impact on mental health, suicide rates, substance use. We know more people are drinking more and that some people in recovery have relapsed.

Our country is in the midst of a well-documented addiction crisis that has enormous public health consequences. Let’s stop sending out messages that suggest substance use is the key to coping and the way to have fun because the negative consequences it carries make it a risk not worth taking.

-- David Sullivan is Northwestern District Attorney;
Laurie Loisel is Director of Outreach and Education at the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office.
The State Office of Rural Health & Health Care Workforce Center reminds everyone through their listserv that updated information on COVID19 in MA can be found at [https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information) and that if you need anything, to feel free to reach out to them. They will do their best to try to connect you with information/resources or elevate your need/concern. In addition, let them know if you would like to share something through their updates or if you would like to have someone added to the listserv by contacting Kirby Lecy, Project Coordinator, at kirby.lecy@mass.gov.

**Rural Funding Opportunities**

- Primary Care Training and Enhancement-Community Prevention and Maternal Health
- Equity-Focused Policy Research: Building Cross-Cutting Evidence on Supports for Families with Young Children
- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program – Psychostimulant Support (RCORP-PS)
- Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program for Paraprofessionals
- Housing Projects Serving Rural Veterans
- Mentoring for Youth Affected by the Opioid Crisis and Drug Addiction
- Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design: Request for Host Applicants
- Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant
- Grants to Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Migrant Programs for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs
- HRSA Evidence-Based Telehealth Grant Program
- SAMHSA Grants for Building Communities of Recovery

**Rural Articles of Interest**

- PPP Reopens Jan 11
- HHS Invests $8 Million to Address Gaps in Rural Telehealth through the Telehealth Broadband Pilot Program
- Record Levels of Infections and Deaths Return to Rural Counties
- Trump Administration Finalizes Permanent Expansion of Medicare Telehealth Services and Improved Payment for Time Doctors Spend with Patients
- HHS Expands Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder
- HHS Announces Provider Relief Fund Reporting Update

**Rural Data/Resources of Interest**

- Rural Health Clinics Modernization Policy Explained
- During Pandemic, Rural Health Foundations Provide Financial Support, Technical Assistance, and Other Services
- Assessing Clinical Quality Performance and Staffing Capacity Differences Between Urban and Rural Health Resources and Services
- Rural Transit Planning in the Time of COVID and Beyond
- COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations: Getting Started
- COVID-19 Vaccination Hesitancy in the United States: A Rapid National Assessment

**Rural Trainings/Webinars/Comment Periods**

- [OMB: Recommendations From the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area Standards Review Committee to the Office of Management and Budget Concerning Changes to the 2010 Standards for Delineating Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas – Comment Period](https://www.whitehouse.gov)
- MATRC: Answering questions About Telehealth and Telemental Health – Second and Fourth Fridays at 12:00 pm ET. The Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center (MATRC) holds a live, one-hour event to answer questions about the basics.
NQCC Spotlight Award Recipients

Debbie Allain-Thomas of Else Where in Athol
Debbie was nominated because of her dedication to helping the region with her support of our most vulnerable members of our community as their faxing needs increased throughout the pandemic and for her generosity with local non-profits.

Athol High School Food Pantry
The Athol High School Food Pantry was nominated for their work in creating a food source available to students and their families during the school day and opening it up to the public two days a week in the afternoon.

Gordon Wild of Domino’s in Athol
Gordon was nominated for his efforts above and beyond to support Athol High School families at the beginning of the pandemic.
**Shout Out!**
Virtual Program open to youth ages 14-21 in Franklin + Hampshire Counties

**Earn $200 stipend for participation!**
Gain leadership and activism skills! Plan and participate in group projects for issues you care about! Make a difference in your community!

- **Franklin County**
  - Wednesdays
  - 3:00-4:30pm

- **Hampshire County**
  - Mondays
  - 3:00-4:30pm

For more information or to enroll, contact Lydia Davis:
email shoutout@communityaction.us
or call/text (413) 834-8768

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**Community Action Youth Programs**

**Virtual LGBTQIA+ Youth Support**

**GenerationQ**
Every Tuesday & Wednesday
For Ages 14-21
3:00 - 5:00 PM
Contact Lionheart at
tlionheart@communityaction.us
Or Text: 413-768-4159

**GenerationQ Middle School**
For Middle School Age Youth
Every Monday
3:00 - 3:30 PM
Contact BJ Miller
jmill@communityaction.us

Join us in a safe, online environment for games, discussions, movies, and more!

---

**YOUTHWORKS**
PAID, ONLINE JOB-READINESS PROGRAM RUNNING MARCH TO JUNE

**Participants will receive:**
- Weekly stipends
- Online, job-readiness training
- Virtual training courses linked to in-demand jobs and careers
- Group and 1:1 support
- Career Pathway webinars and access to industry sector employers

Priority, rolling admission will be given to applicants who complete the application by February 19th. Applications open until March 15th.
To apply, go to: https://bit.ly/2Mqb5w1
***Please note, you must select Northampton as the Program City, but you do not need to be from Northampton to participant

For more information, visit: https://www.communityaction.us/youthworks

**Eligibility Requirements:**
- 16-21 years old
- Lives in Franklin or Hampshire County
- Low-income or eligible for free or reduced lunch

Questions? Contact Kevin
(413) 834-0140
KFox@communityaction.us
Athol High School Food Pantry

Our pantry is open and located on the Lake Ellis Side of AHS
Turn down Lake Ellis Road (By Mr. Mike’s Mobil Gas Station), take a left into
the back entrance of AHS.

Individuals from surrounding towns are welcome to the AHS pantry! We
will need to know how many people live in your home, what town you live
in and what type of income do you receive.

AHS Pantry will be open: Monday 2:30 P—4:00 P
Wednesday 4:00 P—5:30 P

For questions about the pantry, you can contact Tammy McBride AHS Food
Pantry Coordinator during pantry hours by calling (978) 249-2436 Ext. 314

Athol High School’s Food Pantry is a program of Athol Royalston Regional School District,
Heywood Healthcare Charitable Foundation, the Worcester County Food Bank and
generous support provided by Hannaford and Dean’s Beans.
Age- and Dementia-Friendly Project Takes an Important Step Forward

— Written by Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, LifePath’s Age-Friendly Program Manager, Pub. 01/15/2021

In October of last year, LifePath launched the Age- and Dementia-Friendly Communities project in Franklin County and the North Quabbin, a community-led effort that aims to bring about policy and systems-level change to make the region more liveable for people of all ages, especially older adults. This 3 to 5 year project has been implemented in hundreds of communities worldwide, including almost 70 municipalities in Massachusetts. Successful projects from across our state have begun various measures to make it easier to age in place, including changes to the built environment and zoning laws, and training local businesses and service providers to be more aware of the needs of older people and those who live with dementia.

Based on WHO/AARP’s 8 domain model, the project starts with collaborating with local select boards to enroll in the Age-Friendly Communities Network, then moves on to a needs assessment phase, an action planning phase, and finally an implementation phase. But prior to any of these phases, the project really starts with ensuring that the community knows about and takes the lead in shaping the process.

During these first few months, our work was focused on doing community outreach to promote and gain support for the Age- and Dementia-Friendly project, and to recruit key community stakeholders as drivers and leaders of these efforts. By design, the project requires strong community participation and leadership so that our efforts are reflecting and responding to the most relevant needs.

To date, we have directly engaged over 100 regional stakeholders including local officials, healthcare and mental health professionals, staff and directors of senior centers and councils on aging, Village Neighbors members, LGBTQIA+ elder advocates, regional planners, transportation and housing professionals, the interfaith community, non-profit staff and leadership, and other civic-minded community members.

Many of these individuals had heard about age-friendly communities in other parts of the state or the country and expressed a lot of enthusiasm about bringing this initiative to Franklin County and the North Quabbin; and even the people who had not heard about the project before were very supportive of this work, recognizing how important it is to create systems that can help us live in dignity and continue contributing to the success of our communities as we age.

Through these interactions and the follow-ups thereafter, we have formed a regional steering committee made up of 13 stakeholders who come from different parts of the region and who are...
active in all of the 8 age-friendly domains. This team will be meeting regularly to coordinate the project’s efforts and to ensure that its priorities reflect those of older adults in our area.

Having established our steering committee, the Age-Friendly project will continue to work with the larger community to promote age- and dementia-friendly practices. More specifically, we have two main objectives for the coming period: working towards enrollment in AARP’s network, and offering age- and dementia-related training programs.

As part of the enrollment process into AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, we need to work with area selectboards to issue Letters of Commitment requesting entry into the network and affirming our intention to make Franklin County and the North Quabbin a more age- and dementia-friendly region. The support of our elected officials is highly important in a project that aims to work on policy and systems change. Please reach out to us if you would like your selectboard to host a presentation in the coming weeks, or if you would like to learn more about bringing this project to your town.

At the same time that we are engaging local elected officials, we will be working with other sectors of the community through age- and dementia-friendly trainings. We will offer and promote training sessions for the general public, as well as some sector-specific trainings for first responders, customer service staff, transportation workers, and others. Allies of the Age- and Dementia-Friendly project such as the Alzheimer’s Association and the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative will bring their vast experience to many of these opportunities.

Despite the challenges one might expect to successful community engagement during this time of social distancing, the Age- and Dementia-Friendly project has been met with a lot of excitement, support, and belief in our region’s potential to be a better place to grow older.

For more information or to get involved in the Age- and Dementia-Friendly project please contact me anytime at: nelkhattabystrauch@lifepathma.org or 413-829-9274. www.lifepathma.org

The Age- and Dementia-Friendly Project will be presented by Lifepath at the NQCC’s online monthly Forum on March 19. Visit www.nqcc.org for more info.

Athol Bird & Nature Club
Please visit https://atholbirdclub.org for more info.

Feb. 10 @ 7:00 pm: ABNC - Online Presentation: “Birding in 19th Century Mass, Emily Dickinson & Birds”—An interesting winter evening presentation as we join Elizabeth Bradley of the Emily Dickenson Museum. There will be a follow up with poems that feature observations of native birds. Register in advance for this webinar at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_popli-nHRpmwr15688q5Zow. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.
North Quabbin Community Coalition
251 Exchange Street, Athol MA 01331
www.nqcc.org

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 provides a compassionate, safe space to offer peer support to allow multiple paths of recovery for all. The Center is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays with All Recovery Meetings happening on those days either in-person or virtually. Visit [https://www.facebook.com/NorthQuabbinRECOVERYcenter](https://www.facebook.com/NorthQuabbinRECOVERYcenter) weekly for times. All are welcome.

**ACT Group**

The ACT Group is held every Tuesday from 1:15 to 2:15 pm. The link to access the meeting is [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82131343295](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82131343295).

**Free Online Narcan Training:**

February 11, 7:00 pm

Participants will learn what an opioid overdose is, how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, and how to administer Narcan to reverse an opioid overdose. Email maile@opioidtaskforce.org to join on Zoom.

**NQCC January Forum:**

Loving Your Recovery, a Presentation by the North Quabbin Recovery Center

February 19, 2021, from 9:00 to 10:30 am - Online Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87256905901?pwd=ekFybHNzWG0zalk0N3pNSnZTYjlvQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87256905901?pwd=ekFybHNzWG0zalk0N3pNSnZTYjlvQT09)

Meeting ID: 872 5690 5901 ~ Passcode: 644702