



North Alabama Mental Health Coalition
May 9, 2023

Attendees (in person):

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| Daniel Adamek (Little Orange Fish) | Jessica Alford (Ross) | Amber Anderson (Children's Rehab Services) |
| Chief David Bailey (Madison Fire) | Erica Bradberry (ADMH) | Annie Brasseale (VOP) |
| Richard Browning (CID) | Darlene Burton (Salvation Army) | Aubin Cawthon (Ross) |
| Rudolfo Chavez (SVDP) | Tonya Davis | Woodie Deleuil (NAMI) |
| La'trisha Coats Fletcher (DHR) | Kevin Free (Salvation Army) | Jennifer Geist (First Stop) |
| Kelli Glass (Wellstone) | Traci Harris (Elm Foundation) | Chaniece Hicks (First Stop) |
| Stephanie Jennings (Best Life Recovery) | Tammy Leeth (Wellstone) | Cheryl McClendon (Wellstone/WES) |
| Diane McCrary (NACC) | Tealacy Mitchell (Thrive) | Jessica Murphy (ADMH) |
| Adina Peyton (GRAMI) | Mark Prescott (NAMI) | Julie Schenck-Brown (Huntsville Police) |
| Randall Stanley (NACH) | Paula Steele (Wellstone Emer. Services) | Asia Sticka (UAH RAN) |
| Sonya Tinsley (NAHCC) | Don Webster (HEMSI) | |

Welcome and Introductions

Introductions are important because you need to find out who might be able to help you.

NAMHC Website and Communications – Daniel Adamek

The website has been newly revised by Daniel. Just contact Daniel if you want your organization to be represented on the website on the collaboration page. We are hoping to drive more traffic (public visibility) to the website. We want to get feedback from the community as well as drive collaboration within the coalition. If you have information that you would like to see on the website, contact Daniel (daniel@littleorangefish.org or (256)683-7995), because he is currently doing all of the updates. Everyone's option is valued. NAMHC meeting minutes are posted on the website in reverse order (the most recent ones are listed first).

Best Life Recovery Residences – Stephanie Jennings

Stephanie is a woman in long term recovery (no drugs or alcohol since Dec. 27, 2014). She is the women's program director of a woman's sober living recovery house called Best Life Recovery Residences. It is a non-profit and a division of "Go Purple USA". It is a regular house in a safe neighborhood within walking distance to jobs. The ladies range in age from 21 to 60. She can handle 8 women at a time and she lives in the house as well. The successful path to recovery is detox treatment and then sober living. She is a peer support specialist and makes sure that the women get to their detox treatment. It is a 6 month program to graduate; however, 1 1/2 to 2 years is the average stay at the house. She helps them learn how to survive on their own and even will go to court with them. They do get drug tested weekly and work the 12 step program. She does allow certain medications such as anti-depressants.

To get admitted to the house, a person can visit the website and fill out an application. Even if someone is not appropriate for her program (she only works with women), she tries to help them out. When they come in the house, they do the 12 step program, work with sponsors and are very involved in the recovery community. When they leave the house, they still have that recovery support for them. A big part of their program is to teach them to be self-supporting, especially in getting a job. She works with local companies such as Publix, Starbucks and First Baptist. Everyone is very open about the fact that they are in recovery. They pay their own rent - \$175 per week which includes everything (clothes, food and transportation). When they come in, she arranges food stamps for them until they get a job and can pay their own way.

The biggest thing is long term recovery. They go to recovery events as well as football games and concerts, so they can learn to live life in recovery in the real world.

A question was asked about intake and eligibility. Clients must be able to pass a drug test, be a woman who is highly motivated, and be between the ages of 21-60. There is no intake fee. After 60 days, rent reduces to \$150.

Someone asked if they take donations. They do accept donations but they prefer that they are seasonally weather appropriate and things you would wear (not out of style). Anything they can't use, they give to the homeless.

Contact info: Stephanie Jennings (267)738-1657 stephanie.jennings@bestliferecovery.org

Partnership for a Drug Free Community – David Battle

David has been in recovery since Sept 30, 1996. He started at Wellstone doing alcohol and substance abuse prevention. He is now doing the program “The Dangers of Vaping” which is funded by the Dept. of Public Health.

People think vaping is safer than cigarettes, but it’s not. Vaping-related marketing is targeting kids.

Kids start vaping because they think it helps with anxiety and stress, comes in flavors (over 15,000), it is disposable, cheaper than cigarettes, and it is easier to access. Vaping doesn’t have the smell or the stigma of cigarettes.

A law has just passed in Alabama about vaping with children under 14 in your car. Second hand vape smoke is unhealthy.

Vapes work by taking an aerosol straight into your lungs. The residue is third hand smoke. The residue accumulates on everything in the house or wherever you vape.

Juul had a 63% market share in the US in 2020. Vaping affects your lungs, heart and brain.

Vape can have the equivalence of 2 packs of cigarettes. E-cigs weren’t as strong as new ones. They now have backpacks with vapes attached so it is very easy to reach. The vapes come in all different forms including a gum pack or a game console so you can take it in school and it doesn’t look suspicious. Parents often aren’t even aware that their children are vaping.

E-cig is battery powered and has rechargeable batteries. The batteries have been known to explode and there have been incidents where kids have had their teeth blown out. The biggest point is that nicotine is a drug and is very addictive. Products like this are hard to regulate when they first come out.

You are not allowed to vape in AA meetings now because it can trigger a response (David said the smell was like crack cocaine).

Nicotine quantity determines how addictive a product is. 43 mg in the Juul is equivalent to about 2+ packs of cigarettes. The Elf bar has 50mg. David said that he had a harder time quitting cigarettes (nicotine) than crack cocaine.

Vapes tastes good, smells good, and you can conceal it. All vaping products contain a high level of nicotine.

Anything that is addictive will change the brain. The lungs are harmed. In the smoke, there are small parts of metal. Vaping irritates the lung linings, starts blocking the arteries and then people can have breathing difficulty. Lots of damage is being done. Alabama has a vaping-related program called “Level 75”. 75% of kids (last year) were not vaping and this level is increasing (79.8%) because of education about the problems associated with vaping.

Menthol was used to attract the black community. Now a similar advertising method is being used today to attract kids to vape. There haven’t been a lot of studies on the dangers of vaping yet because it hasn’t been around long.

Partnership tries to educate the kids and the parents. They work wherever they need to go. They also work with the Department of Public Health. He encouraged us to set good examples as parents.

info@thedrugfreepartnership.org

The Love Hunt, 57 North Hampton/Little Orange Fish – Janna Peterson

Janna is the founding executive director of “57 North Hampton” (a local mental health advocacy organization) which helps to provide free mental health resources to those without access and also teaches mental health strategies. They are having an upcoming event in collaboration with Little Orange Fish called “The Love Hunt”. It is a weeklong scavenger hunt to introduce the resources for mental health in Huntsville. They used to do this every year and are now bringing it back.

The Love Hunt will be held May 21-27 and participants will be able to all kinds of activities including pottery and exercise. Janna invited mental health organizations to get involved and become a partner so they can make people aware of their resources. In order to become involved, you fill out a form, display the Love Hunt sign in

your business and promote it on social media. Visit the website www.lovehunt.live and scroll down to partner with them. The deadline is tomorrow (Wednesday May 10, 2023) to become a partner in this event. She is hoping this will make people more aware of where to go when they are in mental health crisis. This is also a chance for them to try out different coping strategies to help with mental health. She mentioned partners can also have a virtual event (she gave an example of an online cooking class).

The Scavenger hunt begins on May 21 at midnight and a map will be released for all participants. They have to scan the QR codes when they go to the partner locations and they get points. Prizes will be awarded, so there is incentive for them to visit the partner locations. At the end of the week (Saturday May 27 from 6 to 10 pm) there will be an event called Love Hunt Live at Campus 805. This is a chance for all the partners to get together and have a dialogue with the community. There will be a live performance by a musician as well as a fireside chat about mental health. The proceeds will go 57 North Hampton to provide free mental health. Janna asked us to share the event with others so they know where to get help when they need it.

Open Floor

A comment was made that much of the discussion on gun violence lately has focused on mental health. Those with mental health are being stigmatized as violent criminals. Daniel said that is a great topic for discussion. It was suggested that we discuss it at the meeting next month. Daniel suggested that we look into the Alabama legislation that is related to that.

On August 18th there is an event at Stovehouse to raise money for GRAMI (“Getting Real About Mental Illness”). The purpose of this organization is to destigmatize mental illness, advocate for more crisis intervention, and get private mental health appointments for first responders. Currently, first responders cannot get mental health assistance without affecting their job. “Juice” will be performing at the Stovehouse event. A VIP ticket will get you in early for a catered meal. General admission will be at 7 pm, including a silent auction. Everyone is encouraged us to come out and support them.

Jennifer mentioned that government contract employees are not getting treatment for mental health because they are worried about losing security clearances. That is a problem in our community.

David mentioned that he attended the International Peace Conference that was held in Birmingham this past weekend. The Institute of Economics and Peace announces a global peace index every year. According to the Institute, America is trending toward “negative peace”. There are more than 40 billion people enslaved currently – more than ever in recorded history. This includes human trafficking, sex trafficking and forced labor.

We need to help, especially young people on the front end, so that they can avoid being trapped in these situations. He encouraged us to look into the International Peace Conference and the Institute of Peace.

The Interact Clubs in high schools (a division of the Rotary Clubs) needs to do projects for the community. This is an opportunity to involve young people in these projects.

This year’s 2023 Point in Time homeless count has been posted. It is on the NACH website. Last year the count was 549 and this year the count is 646. Jennifer said this is a correlation to the growth in our city as well. We are battling with other cities that are transporting their homeless to Huntsville. First Stop has helped 55 people last year out of homelessness, but how many new people came in? There are a huge number of people coming in from outside the city and state.

Daniel encouraged everyone to go to coalition website and click the “Get Involved” button – put in suggestions and do the gap survey. This will provide guidance for these meetings.

*Next Meeting
Tuesday June 13, 2023
11:00 am at Wellstone*