



## *2023 Annual Report*



Gwendolyn A. Bork  
*President*

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## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

**Dear WNY Changemakers,**

2023 has been a revealing year of continued struggles within our youth as they attempt to build resiliency in an uncertain world that's balancing on the edge of social and economic collapse.

According to the 2021 CLYDE Survey of youth in grades 8, 10, and 12 in Lancaster/Depew:

- 1. 54% of Youth reported that there aren't any adults in the neighborhood to talk to about something important.**
- 2. 38% of Youth reported they are no good at all.**
- 3. 27% of Youth reported that they sometimes think life is not worth it**
- 4. 58% of Youth reported there's no one in their neighborhood that said they were proud of them when they did something good**
- 5. 36% reported that they have been sad/depressed most of the time**
- 6. 24% think they are a failure**

The need for community level support is greater than ever. They need help! What has become of their cherished time to be young, and innocent was robbed of them by the global pandemic and social media became their savior. Millions of eyes are watching as they watch each other attempt to be socially accepted by be masses and the pressure is incomprehensible. The continued uneasiness of the future haunts them as they try to plan for their next steps after they graduate yet mourn the loss of some of their friends right here in the community who struggle with vaping addictions, marijuana use disorder causing schizophrenic episodes, binge drinking, and the fate of losing a friend to fentanyl laced marijuana. Nothing is safe anymore and they know it.

Parents have been led to believe that because marijuana was legalized on a non-medicinal level, the local shops slinging it out the back door or even the local Indian reservation is safe yet have no idea how dangerous these products actually are. If you aren't buying marijuana products from a NYS licensed dispensary (which there are only 2 in all of Erie County as of 12/2023), no one can guarantee your safety. Cartels created their networks in NY years before it was even legalized and with current open borders the network has expanded. Fentanyl is killing people at a higher rate than pre-pandemic levels and it also being reported across NY to be found in marijuana products. Marijuana will be our next pandemic for our youth if we don't educate ourselves on the basic facts of what's happening around us.

Youth are screaming for authentic connection and guidance. They want to help themselves with our support if we would just listen. They want to be seen and heard. Our future exists now.

2024 will not be easy for any of us but that is why you are reading this, because you know this, and you are doing something about it. You are willing to prioritize the fate of our youth by standing in their place and providing the safe space for them to learn and grow. You have been the reason why we succeeded and will continue to succeed going forward. Thank you for your time, talents, and treasure. Thank you for your faith in FOCUS.

With Honor,  
***Gwendolyn A. Bork***  
President



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Board of Directors 2023-2025



#### President

**Gwendolyn A. Bork**

*I have a personal passion to empower our youth into becoming the leaders they were meant to be through community collaboration and support. I know where they are because I've been there and my legacy will be in pouring my life into them.*



#### Vice President

**Deb LaBounty**  
*Spectrum Health & Human Services*

*My heart is always with the most vulnerable among us and I believe it is my purpose in life to do my best to support and help them through compassion, education and opportunity.*



#### Secretary

**Gianna Ryniec**  
*Depew HS Student*

*Leadership is something I've been recognized for and is a passion of mine to assist and give back to others.*



#### Treasurer

**Jessica Mead**  
*FOCUS*

*I want to be able to make a difference in our local community.*



#### Member

**Debbie Glowny**  
*Bank on Buffalo*

*I wanted to be a part of the organization because...I love to make a difference and give back whenever possible. If I can help to deter one student from going down the wrong path and getting a bad start in life...then it's all worth it.*



#### Member

**Mindy Nowak**  
*Hair Shop 777*

*Children are our future, and preserving their blossoming minds in an unaltered state is an honor that I am blessed to be a part of.*



#### Member

**Audrey Hamernik**  
*Village of Depew*

*As part of community development chairman of village of Depew, I wanted to be involved in something that is creating positive change for the youth in our community.*

See more at <https://forourcommunitytoday.org/about-us>



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Mission, Vision, Goals, and Tactics



#### Date Established

January 2018



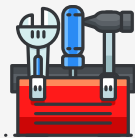
#### Mission

Prevent and reduce youth substance use within the community by reducing community risk factors that encourage substance use (e.g., parent attitudes) and promoting community protective factors that minimize the odds of youth substance use



#### Vision

Drug Free Community, Drug Free Youth



#### Tactics

Through evidence-based, data-driven environmental strategies, and federally approved strategic prevention framework, we create youth-centered, drug free communities



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### How FOCUS Gets Things Done



#### 12 COMMUNITY SECTORS

FOCUS works with all members of the community to effect change

#### STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

FOCUS uses a comprehensive planning and implementation framework to get things done



#### SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

FOCUS uses evidence-based interventions to effect community change





## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### 2023 Key Findings & Themes

The FOCUS assessment committee conducted several data collection and analysis exercises during the program year. Here are some of the most striking outcomes .



**Marijuana is readily available to youth.** Parents, friends and siblings, parties, Snapchat stories and social groups are common sources. Marijuana is available in edible, smokeable, and vape forms. Although past 30-day use by Depew youth is lower than the national average (8.8%, 11% respectively), use is increasing again nationally after a decline during the 2019 COVID pandemic. The legalization of recreational marijuana in New York State along with 43.3% of youth reporting parental attitudes are favorable toward drug use set the stage for increased access.



**Youth have limited knowledge about the safety of marijuana use.** Most of the responses about the safety of marijuana products referred to concerns about the products being laced with other substances if accessed from sources other than dispensaries. While this is may be true, there are many other risks pertaining to underage use. It is illegal to use marijuana under age 21; it is also unsafe. Impacts on the developing brain and academic success, increase in mental health issues, and the potential for risky behaviors and addiction are well-documented consequences of continued marijuana use.



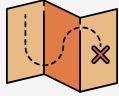
**Overall, there is significant need for community education about marijuana in the Depew community.** This was perhaps the clearest theme that emerged from the data collected. There is a need for community-wide education about the many risks of marijuana use. For example, parents may benefit from education on the liability of providing and allowing youth to use marijuana in the home (social host ordinance) and how to safely store adult marijuana products. Youth may benefit from education about the developing brain as well as differential and universal risks of various marijuana delivery methods. Community awareness about the many risks of underage use is important to minimize consumption and consequences while changing community norms about the safety of youth marijuana use.



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



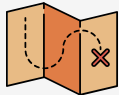
**Goal 1** - Decrease past-30 day marijuana use in students grades 8-12 by 2% every two years.



**Outcome 1** - From 2021 to 2023, past 30-day marijuana use decreased from 6.8% to 4.9%. This objective was met.



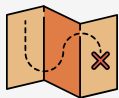
**Goal 2** - Decrease past-30 day alcohol use in students grades 8-12 by 2% every two years.



**Outcome 2** - From 2021 to 2023, past 30-day alcohol use decreased from 14.0% to 11.7%. This objective was met.



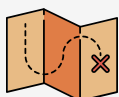
**Goal 3** - Increase youth and parental sector stakeholders by eight total individuals.



**Outcome 3** - From August 2023 to August 2023, the total number of youth and adult sector stakeholders increased from 13 to 16.



**Goal 4** - Raise private capital of \$20,000 by 12/31/2022.



**Outcome 4** - The coalition raised \$7,800 in private capital by 12/31/2023, or 39% of goal.



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Highlights from 2023



**150+ Activities Offered** - from providing information to changing consequences for substance use



**14,000+ Adults Reached** - through community events, direct outreach, educational sessions, and more



**10,000+ Youth Reached** - through community events, direct outreach, educational sessions, and more



#### Facebook

896 followers  
32,000 reached in 2023



#### YouTube

2,784 reached in 2023



#### TikTok

114 followers  
5,700 reached in 2023



#### FOCUS Website

6,158 reached in 2023



#### Instagram

141 followers



#### Digital Campaign

96,900 reached in 2023



#### Radio

3,500 reached in 2023



#### Newspapers

120,000 reached in 2023





## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Highlights from 2023, continued

**Spring 2023**

**Friday April 28th 11AM -1PM**

**#CHANGEMAKER**

SALVATORE'S - 6461 TRANSIT RD., DEPEW, NY 14043

**COMMUNITY IMPACT CONFERENCE**

WHO ARE THE WNY CHANGEMAKERS? WHAT'S THEIR PASSION FOR THE COMMUNITY? THE YOUTH? WHAT'S NEXT IN 2023?

**MEET YOUR MODERATOR & PANELISTS**

 GWENDOLYN BORK President/Moderator FOCUS	 LUCAS CELLINO President Callina Plumbing Heating	 KATE GLASER Founder Hope Rises Network	 DWIGHT LOWE Manager People Inc.	 ANDREW BENNETT VP Children's Hospital of Buffalo Foundation
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**LEGACY SPONSORS NEEDED**  
Sponsorships starting at \$500  
Email us at: [forourcommunitytoday@gmail.com](mailto:forourcommunitytoday@gmail.com)

Sit down lunch & refreshments. Be inspired to make an impact.  
\$35 per person / VIP Tables of 8 = \$250 / Vendors—\$100  
REGISTER ONLINE BY FRIDAY APRIL 21ST @ [WWW.FOROURCOMMUNITYTODAY.ORG](http://WWW.FOROURCOMMUNITYTODAY.ORG)

**Fall 2023**

**Friday October 13th 11AM -1PM**

**#CHANGEMAKER**

STO LAT, 4475 TRANSIT RD., BUFFALO, NY 14221

**COMMUNITY IMPACT CONFERENCE**

WHO ARE THE WNY CHANGEMAKERS? WHAT'S THEIR PASSION FOR THE COMMUNITY? WHAT'S NEXT?

**MEET YOUR MODERATOR & PANELISTS**

 GWENDOLYN BORK President/Moderator FOCUS	 MERCEDES WILSON TV Host/CFO WBBW/Sadie's Ballin	 LISA LATROVATO President 50 Fab Women	 KIMBERLY LARUSSA Founder & TV Host Channel 4 Sweet Buffalo Show	 MICHAEL NORRIS NYS Assemblyman NYS 14th District
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**LEGACY SPONSORS**

Sit down lunch & refreshments. Be inspired to make an impact.  
\$35 per person / VIP Tables of 8 = \$250 / Vendors—\$100  
REGISTER ONLINE BY FRIDAY OCTOBER 6th @ [WWW.FOROURCOMMUNITYTODAY.ORG](http://WWW.FOROURCOMMUNITYTODAY.ORG)



The Community Impact Awards recognize change makers in the WNY community. 2023 honorees included

#### Award

Legacy Award  
Inspiration Award  
Trailblazer Award  
Community Champion Award  
Scholar Award  
Purple Heart Award  
Passionate for Prevention Award  
Rising Star Award  
Emerging Leader Award  
Next Generation Award  
Mission in Motion  
Saint of Servanthood

#### Recipient

Chick Fil A (Transit & Losson)  
M Wood Accounting  
Congressman Langworthy  
Skoob's Village Grille  
Jay Lupini - Depew HS Principal  
Cheryll Moore - ECDH  
Jodie Altman - KEDS  
Gianna Ryniec, Depew HS  
Zoe Kaminski, Canisius College  
Kate Glaser, Hope Rises Network  
Trina Burruss, United Way  
Sister Johnice, Response to Love Center



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Highlights from 2023, continued



Glofest is a drug- and alcohol-free event where youth are accepted as they are to enjoy a night of dancing, games, and learning.



**Are you a teen in NY?**  
**ENTER NOW TO WIN \$1000**  
**#NYTAKESOVERTIKTOK TALENT CONTEST**

FOCUS held a New York State-wide TikTok talent contest in 2023, competing against other coalitions from downstate and reaching hundreds of youth. The grand prize winner won \$1,000. The #NYTAKESOVERTIKTOK hashtag reached at least 97,800 people.

FOCUS held a mini-golf tournament in July 2023 at Broadway Driving Range & Miniature Golf. With donations from Tops Friendly Markets and help from coalition volunteers, youth had a blast and four youth won a \$25 Amazon gift card each.





## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Legacy Partner Program

As part of its strategy to become a sustainable coalition, FOCUS launched the Legacy Partner program. This program is aimed at launching and sustaining the FOCUS Foundation for Addiction Prevention.

#### Platinum Legacy Partners (\$1,000+ donation)

##### Organizations



Robert E Shaff Ltd. Insurance and Real Estate

##### Individuals

Deb Glowny & Bank on Buffalo  
Sally Stier of The Clarity Group  
Mike Kelleher of Hogan Willig  
John and Linda Bruso of Bruso Family  
Glenn Jackson of Jackson Family  
Joe and Nancy Weiss of Weiss Family  
Deb LaBounty and Family

#### Gold Legacy Partners (\$500-\$999 donation)

##### Organizations



Amherst Lutheran Church  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

##### Individuals

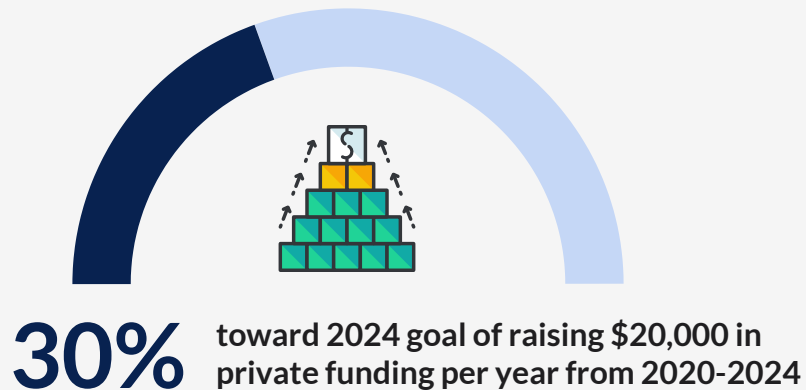
The Wood & LaBounty Family  
MJ Zak Family  
Laura Smith Family



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Sustainability Funding and Opportunities

#### Funding Update



#### Other funding source updates:



Federal: \$125,000 per year - Drug Free Communities Grant  
State: \$2,500 per year  
County: \$0 (-\$20,000 annually since 2020)  
Private: \$7,800 (39% of \$20,000)

#### How You Can Help

Here are just a few ways you can help make FOCUS a sustainable part of our community:

- Become a Legacy Partner
- Become a Community Contributor
- Sponsor Events
- Support Impact Conferences
- Provide resources in partnerships for in-kind donations
- Like us, share us and follow us on our social media
- Volunteer!





## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Community Leader,

Our nation is facing an Addiction Epidemic and right here in our community our kids are getting hit hard. Trauma, uncertainty, and poverty plagues their lives, the last thing that should plague them is purpose for their lives.

At FOCUS: For Our Community Unity & Support, our Mission is to prevent and reduce substance use among youth within the community by reducing the factors that increase the risk of addiction and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance use through the establishment of Community Collaboration.

We utilize 12 Sectors/Stakeholders within the community and their resources to carry out the success of this plan which is data-driven and evidence-based. They are Government, Education, Schools, Civic Volunteer Groups, Religious Organizations, Healthcare, Treatment Providers, Youth Support Organizations, Youth, Parents, Media, and Businesses; and we need your help.

**Can you help us continue our mission and reduce substance use among our youth by Sponsoring our Up-Coming Events, become a Legacy Partner, or Community Contributor?**

With your help we can:

- Incentive the youth to help with projects by awarding them with gift cards
- Reach more youth through our outreach events and make the event free so money isn't a barrier
- Continue creating branding that the youth will wear like t-shirts and sweatshirts and give a way for awareness
- Build our FOCUS Foundation so that our operating expenses (website, email, marketing/not personnel) can be paid

Here are the ways you can donate or submit items:

- Call us at 716-444-6769
- Send a check, made payable to "FOCUS" to 3101 Townline Rd. Alden NY 14004, add Memo line directing funds
- "Donate" on our Website via PayPal or Credit Card, add Memo saying where you the money to go
- Email us at [forourcommunitytoday@gmail.com](mailto:forourcommunitytoday@gmail.com)

Graciously,

**The FOCUS Board of Directors Administration**