

Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency Newsletter



From the President's Desk

We predicted and achieved a successful 2026 Giving Challenge. Thanks to individual donors and the Paterson Foundation. The 2026 Giving Challenge contributed \$3500 more than our 2022 Giving Challenge to SICD. The funds raised will directly support enhanced website features and updates to the SICD Information Resource Booklet. On page four, Denise Cail, Director of Strategic Planning and Fundraising, will share our 2027 goals.

We are pleased to welcome two new members to team. Dr. Margarita Avedisian, comes to us with wealth of experience as a Children and Adolescent therapist specializing in childhood Trauma. We look forward to her contributions to our youth prevention-intervention initiative. Stacey Rickelmann, Brand and Operations Manager for Project 180 has already provided valuable input on the SICD Information Resource Book update. Read more about their story and decision to join SICD on page three.

Linda Christensen, Director of Education, is a contributing member of multiples local, state and national organizations seeking prevention, intervention and support for long term recovery. Linda customized programs for specific groups upon request. Her online, Parent Prevention Program, has received rave review and on page two she will share a sneak peek of the rollout of "Stronger than Threat" Prevention-Intervention Campaign.

Jennifer Fretz, is working on the application process to get our Education Program court order approval. Jennifer completed the Addiction Policy Forums Facilitator Training Program in June, joining our team qualifying the delivery Responding to Addiction Community Training Programs.

Jennifer is the founder of Freedom House which aims to keep parents and children together in sober living during early recovery.

Congratulations to Mia Alexandra Gomez, completed her master's in Social Work from USF. While at USF Mia developed a collegiate recovery program that SICD looking to support expansion of this opportunity. Stay tuned for more on this topic. Mia has supported on online Zoom Trainings with feedback for online chat which has been invaluable.

Look for Mia, Marguerite, and Dr. Margarita at the SICD tent on upcoming community events including: Sarasota Fights Fentanyl Walk, Life;Story Run/Walk, and Healthy Start Coalition's Eighth Annual Regional Summit.

Special thanks to Creative Director of Communications, Marguerite Hazen. Marguerite has expanded reach with website management, Facebook and Newsletter updates.

Save the date: January 29, 2027 Stoneybrook Club House Sarasota 34238 Tea Party Auction Luncheon.

Gratefully,
Robin Hain, SICD President

In this newsletter you can expect:

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Upcoming Opportunity for support

Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency Board



Education Programs

Stronger Than the Storm

We continued our efforts to secure funding from the Baycross Foundation and The Huddle to support our Stronger Than the Storm poster program *Coming Soon*, which engages young people and communities in conversations about resilience, healthy coping, and seeking support during challenging times. (Read more on page 3)

During the summer months, the Board continues to collaborate and develop concepts and programs for Education Programs to design and implement. This summer, our focus included expanding community education, strengthening partnerships, and bringing emerging issues related to substance use and child development into our programming.



Touring All Star Children's Foundation

R'Club Special Services New Beginnings Program

As part of my continued committee work with Sean Couch and the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, R'Club reached out to us through Sean to provide training for staff in their Special Services New Beginnings Program. R'Club, based in St. Petersburg, serves more than 4,000 infants, preschool, elementary, middle school, and special-needs children each day across more than 47 locations throughout Pinellas County. Their programs include Preschool, Pre-K, VPK, Head Start, elementary and middle school services, and special-needs programming. On August 15, Robin and I presented two educational sessions to 32 R'Club staff members. Responding to Addiction, a two-hour presentation, focused on addiction literacy, reducing stigma, understanding substance use disorders, and practical strategies for supporting individuals and families affected by addiction. What Parents Need to Know About Youth and Substance Use, a one-hour presentation, addressed youth substance use, brain development, risk and protective factors, prevention, and effective communication with young people. The youth substance use session also included information on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and the potential prenatal impacts of marijuana exposure. Participants were introduced to our Stronger Than the Storm poster as a tool for opening conversations with young people about resilience, healthy coping, and positive decision-making. The enthusiastic participation of the R'Club staff demonstrated the value of bringing current, evidence-informed information directly to professionals who work with children and families.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Through our collaboration with the Learning Center, Robin and I attended a two-hour Zoom presentation on July 28, "FASD: What It Is and What Do We Do About It." The presentation brought Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) to our attention as an important issue to incorporate into our educational programming. The information provided a valuable perspective on the developmental and behavioral impacts associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. Current research suggests that FASD may affect approximately 1 in 20 school-age children in the United States, highlighting the importance of increased awareness, early recognition, understanding, and appropriate support for children and families. We will be incorporating information about FASD into our future presentations, particularly when discussing risk factors for substance use, brain development, and the importance of prevention.

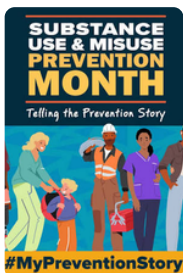


Behavioral Health Stakeholders Consortium

These summer activities continue to strengthen our partnerships and expand the reach of Education Programs. By bringing emerging issues such as FASD, addiction, youth substance use, and resilience into our presentations, we are continuing to build education and prevention efforts that support children, families, educators, and the communities they serve.

-Linda Christensen, Director of Education Programs

A Season of Awareness, Prevention, and Recovery



As we move into the fall, several important observances remind us of the continued need for awareness, prevention, support, and hope within our communities. August 31st marked International Overdose Awareness Day, followed by National Recovery Month throughout September and Substance Use and Misuse Prevention Month in October. These observances, supported by SAMHSA and the Pennington Institute, highlight the importance of reducing stigma, increasing education, celebrating recovery, and providing individuals and families with the resources they need. At Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency, this is why we continue working to create programs and supports that help individuals and families find recovery and build healthier futures. Recovery looks different for everyone, but no one should have to navigate the journey alone. Through education, connection, prevention efforts, and community support, we hope to make a lasting difference. Over the next few months, we are proud to be involved in several community events, including the Sarasota Fights Fentanyl Walk, the Life;Story Run/Walk, and the Healthy Start Coalition's Eighth Annual Regional Summit. We look forward to connecting with our community, sharing resources, and continuing the important conversation around substance use, prevention, and recovery.





Meet Our Newest Volunteers

Stacey Rickelmann

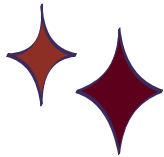
My name is Stacey Rickelmann, and I serve as the Brand & Operations Manager at Project 180. I was born and raised in Sarasota County and am a person in long term recovery. Growing up with addiction in my family, and later experiencing my own journey through addiction, gave me a deep understanding of both the challenges and the hope that recovery can bring. Today, I find the greatest purpose in giving back to the community that has been impacted by these same issues.

I am grateful to volunteer with the Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency and support its efforts to raise awareness, reduce stigma, expand access to prevention, recovery, and community resources, and help family members and loved ones know that understanding, support, and hope are attainable. I believe that by sharing knowledge, fostering compassion, and working together, we can help create healthier communities where recovery is possible and no one has to face addiction alone.



Dr. Margarita Avedisian

My name is Dr. Margarita Avedisian, and I am a clinical psychologist with experience working with children, adolescents, and adults. I earned my Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from The Catholic University of America and completed post-doctoral training in Clinical Child Psychology at The George Washington University. My clinical experience includes individual, couples, family, and co-parenting therapy, using approaches such as CBT and EMDR. I began my career working in jail and prison settings and have enjoyed supporting diverse populations throughout my career. Now semi-retired, I am passionate about giving back to my community and advocating for mental health. Outside of work, I enjoy Pilates, swimming, and spending time with my family.



Community News

USF Collegiate Recovery Community

Student leaders at the University of South Florida have begun an initiative to develop a Collegiate Recovery Community. We began hosting virtual All-Recovery Meetings and gauging student interest for the Spring 2026 semester. We saw promising interest and engagement from students at the Tampa campus, especially regarding facilitating naloxone access and mitigating the impact of stigma. Current efforts to support students in recovery or impacted by addiction include establishing consistent support through peer-led meetings and events, introducing educational workshops and trainings, becoming a naloxone distribution partner with the Florida Overdose Prevention Program, and becoming a recognized student organization housed within the School of Social Work. Collegiate recovery communities and programs have experienced rapid growth in the last decade, and are nationally recognized as an integral resource to support the personal growth, academic pursuits, and resiliency of students in recovery as they navigate the unique ecology of higher education institutions. Our long-term vision for this organization is to create a sustainable, university sponsored program that fosters a sense of community, resiliency, and personal growth by integrating recovery support into broader health initiatives and programs at the University of South Florida.

Stronger Than the Storm Poster Program

Stronger Than the Storm is a teen-focused resilience and coping skills project designed to help young people navigate life's challenges, including stress, loss, trauma, anxiety, peer pressure, and difficult relationships. The project reminds teens that while they cannot always control what happens to them, they can choose what happens next.

Through relatable messages, creative activities, and practical coping tools, teens are encouraged to recognize their strengths, set healthy boundaries, seek support, express their emotions, and build positive connections. The goal is to help teens understand that asking for help is a strength—not a weakness—and that they are not alone, their story isn't over, and their future is worth fighting for.

Upcoming Community Events:

- Sarasota Fights Fentanyl; 9/7/26, JD Hamel Park
- Life;Story; 9/19/26, Nathan Benderson Park
- Healthy Start Coalition's Eighth Annual Regional Summit; 10/13/26, The Carlisle Inn





Thank you! Fundraising efforts 2026-2027



The Giving Challenge, which was held in Sarasota/Bradenton on April 15th-16th, was our biggest fundraiser this year to date. We raised a total of \$4918 which included donations from 28 wonderful individuals and a matching donation from The Patterson Foundation. We at SICD are truly grateful for each and every donation we received. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts, your generosity allows us to continue our mission to provide our support and education on substance misuse free of charge.

We are also extremely grateful to be awarded a grant from Baycross Huddle of Light . With this grant we will launch one of our new teen prevention programs "Stronger than the Storm", an animated story aimed at teen substance misuse prevention. This initiative will provide a toolkit for teens dealing with trauma and substance peer pressure, enabling resilience and the confidence to 'say no'. Stay tuned for more information and roll out dates!

Save The Date!! Our annual TEA PARTY fundraiser will be held early next year at the beautiful Stoneybrook Golf and Country Club in Sarasota on January 29th 2027.

Starting at noon we will hold a silent auction with excellent items to bid on, a 50/50 draw, and a best hat competition so bring your creativity! Stonybrook will provide us with a high tea prepared by their fabulous chef, and we will be entertained by beautiful harp music. This is an event you don't want to miss so please bring your family and friends! Watch your inbox in the coming months to reserve you tickets.

If you have items you would like to donate to our silent auction please send me an email at denisecail@mac.com.

Exciting news! In 2027, SICD will be updating our information booklets and resource guides to be able to reach a boarder audience and better support those going through substance misuse and their families. If you would like to support this initiative, a donation can be made via our website at sicdfl.org and click on the 'donate' button'.

Warmest Regards,
Denise Cail, Director of Fundraising and Strategic Planning



Thank you!

**STRONGER
THAN THE STORM**

SUNCOAST INSTITUTE ON
CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

941-479-0520



www.sicdfl.org



Bible Verse of the Quarter:
Philippians 4:13