Heroin Crisis Prompts State Action

In 2010, when there was just one heroin death in Onondaga County, New York State stopped funding Substance Programs, including the one at ACR Health, which provided case management and referrals for those in need of drug and alcohol treatment.

- By 2015, there were 34 heroin/opioid deaths in Onondaga County.
- Prescription painkiller abuse soared, from 186 opioid-related deaths statewide in 2003, climbing to 914 by 2012.
- Onondaga County now has the highest rate of babies born with drug dependency: 26 in every 1,000 births - 4 times higher than state rate.
- Oswego County’s rate of drug addicted newborns is 137 per 10,000 - NY state rate is 72.
- Rome City police responded to more than 40 overdoses in 2013.

Now, in 2016, with the heroin and prescription painkiller epidemic in full swing, the state has re-instated and expanded ACR Health’s Substance Programs, including a grant for a first-of-its-kind endeavor for us – a clinic to provide limited health care for injection drug users.

The basic substance grant will be used for enhanced outreach to active substance users who are currently not in drug treatment. The goal is to educate and engage substance users in services along with reducing their risk for HIV, hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases; and to engage HIV+ individuals with medical and support services.

Substance Services Coordinator Nicole Gibson oversees the nine-county effort. “It takes time and trust to establish a relationship with an active substance user. If and when they decide they are ready for a treatment program, we will get them enrolled. In the meantime, our efforts are on keeping them healthy and free of HIV and Hepatitis C.”

ACR Health has harm reduction help for hundreds of injection drug users through the Safety First Syringe Exchange Program (SEP), with offices in Syracuse and Utica, and syringes available throughout our nine-county service area. The second substance grant we recently received establishes a health clinic at ACR Health offices that will treat those individuals affiliated with the Syracuse SEP.

“Injection drug users often suffer from untreated abscesses on their skin where they inject heroin, but they go without treatment, often because they don’t trust the system,” said Ms. Gibson. “When they use our clinic, they can enroll in a health insurance plan that covers medical treatment when they need it.”

Nicole Gibson, Substance Services Coordinator
A tradition has taken hold at the Q Center on major holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas. Youth gather with their friends, and some family, around a table to enjoy a meal; the normality of the circumstance taking the edge off the cold fact that most have nowhere else to be. If the Q weren’t open, they’d be alone, perhaps couch surfing, in a shelter, or even homeless.

But on December 25, the Q was packed with a crowd of about 50, dining on delicious food supplied by Dave & Buster’s, a family-friendly eatery at Destiny USA that offers a sports-bar-style setting for American food.

Dave & Buster’s employees who prepared the Q Center Christmas dinner: Everett, Dennis, Scott, Roger, Araina, Christina, JD and Lisa

“One of the biggest perks of working at Dave & Buster’s is the freedom that is given to us on a local level to support and contribute to non-profits in our local community,” said Christina Rodgers, Dave & Buster’s Special Events Manager. The four core values of Dave & Buster’s as a company are:

• Founder’s Spirit
• Everybody is Somebody
• Fun to the Core
• You Got It Attitude

“Our values get to shine brightly too by working with a great organization like The Q Center,” said Christina. “It was our honor to have hopefully made the holidays a little bit better for the kids.”

It certainly did. “Their Christmas dinner for our youth and families sends a clear message of support as well as an all inclusive ‘food and fun’ mission. We are so proud of this collaboration and wish Dave & Buster’s a successful new year!” said Maureen Harrington O’Neill, Q Center Development Associate.
Clinic patients will be screened by Nurse Practitioners for Hepatitis C, HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, and will receive preventative care. In addition, ACR Health also offers certified training programs on how to administer Narcan (Naloxone), which reverses opioid and heroin overdoses.

This training is available to those who use the Syringe Exchange Program, the health clinic, and to the public.

ACR Health is in the process of staffing the clinic and is advertising for health care professionals. If you qualify, or know someone who does, apply through our website at ACRHealth.org. Job descriptions are listed below.

### Nurse Practitioner: Medical Clinic - 2 Part Time Positions

ACR Health is seeking two compassionate and highly motivated individuals to work with injection drug users and other at-risk populations. The position will provide: acute medical care based on presenting issues; disease screening, including HIV, Hepatitis C, STI and TB testing; screening of other medical conditions and referral to external network of providers; vaccinations; basic wellness exams; and, prescriptions to meet patient’s needs. N.P. will maintain accurate record keeping using MEDENT EMR and complete required reports in accordance with agency, funder and medical clinic policies and guidelines. N.P. will collaborate with agency staff to ensure follow up and other provider’s is offered and followed through with. N.P. will report to offsite Medical Director.

Hours are part-time and negotiable; no weekends required. Practitioners will be independent contractors and will be compensated in accordance with their caseloads.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**
- Current New York State license as a Registered Professional Nurse. Current New York State Certification as an Adult or Family Nurse Practitioner.
- Minimum of two (2) years experience in acute care nursing.
- Minimum of two (2) years work experience as a Nurse Practitioner required. Master of Science Degree in Nursing or its direct equivalent, preferred. Experience with MEDENT (EMR) preferred. A valid NYS driver’s license and access to a reliable and insured vehicle. Bilingual candidates are strongly encouraged to apply!

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**Open House at Utica Office**

January 14, 2016 - ACR brass are lined up to welcome the public at the grand opening of ACR Health’s new and expanded Mohawk Valley Headquarters at 287 Genesee Street, Utica. Pictured are ACR Health Deputy Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh, Director of Support Services, Jeanette O’Connor Shanley, Executive Director, Michael Crinnin, and Mohawk Valley Regional Director, Nicole Deveny.

ACR Health offers a full range of services to the Mohawk Valley, including the Q2, a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth, which is housed at the Syringe Exchange Program, the health clinic, and to the public.

ACR Health also has a Syringe Exchange that provides clean needles; Navigators to help individuals and businesses make informed health insurance decisions; and Support Services to individuals with chronic diseases, including HIV/AIDS, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, asthma, substance use disorders, and serious mental illness, with the goal of positive health outcomes.

ACR Health offers a wide variety of targeted prevention and sexual health services to individuals, from youth through adulthood, to community groups and individuals to empower them to make informed and responsible decisions.
Thank you **Holiday Angels**

To the 157 “Angels” who spent their time, talent, and treasure:
Thank you so much for participating in the 2015 Holiday Angel program! You’ve proven that the spirit of the Holiday Angel program is stronger than ever during these tough times.

There are many heartwarming stories from this year’s Holiday Angel program. Nine-year-old Ruben and his 5-year-old sister Lilly donated savings from their allowance and chores to the Holiday Angel program after their mother explained what ACR Health was all about. And a young mom was thrilled and grateful for gifts received for her 12-year-old son. She is blind and is in pain daily from diabetes and multiple sclerosis.

There was just one client remaining (which came in at the 11th hour) when a young couple, Damien and Andrea Nitu-Marquise, offered to sponsor the family of five just days before Christmas. Within three days, they returned with three big bags of gifts for the client. And, the wife is a mom-to-be!

The Eventful Group on Clinton Street in Syracuse is new to the program this year. They shopped - very generously - for a large family and had packages for everyone.

One Angel told us “Every conversation I had with our team when discussing our participation as Angels, during the shopping we did for the family and our wrapping party always came back to how truly thankful we are for what we have and how comforting it was knowing we were helping these young families in need. You can’t put a price on how good it felt and how amazing it still feels reflecting on it. Thank you for what you guys do and know we can’t wait to be back in 2016!”

Here’s a list of 2015 Holiday Angels who sponsored 345 clients and family members.

**Angels**
- Adam Peruta
- Adjuah Williams & University Hospital
- Alisha Graf
- Amiee Pelletierie
- Andrea Kowalczyk
- Andreea Nitu-Marquise
- Angela Clarkson
- Anita M. Bertrand
- April Johnson
- Ashley Casey & R.E.A.L. for Planned Parenthood
- Becky Corbin
- Beth Machan
- Betty Williams
- Bob Ford
- Broadway Cares/Equity Fight AIDS, Inc.
- Bruce Swift
- Cari Mcavoy & Indian River GSA
- Carol Sweet
- Carol Volkensdorfer
- Carrie Portzline-Large
- Charles Pannaci
- Cheryl Goodwin
- Cheryl Lincoln-Lovely
- Christy Tubbs & Syr. VA Work Department
- Cindy Gordon-Phillips & Family
- Connie Palumb
- Cristina & Kathleen De Moya
- Cub Scout Pack 620 & Randy Steffen
- Dale Pierce
- Dana Pierce
- Deb Aragano
- Deb Maltitano & Cathy J. Berry, MD & Associates
- Deborah D’Angelo & Westhill HS TATF
- Deborah Hardy & Vivian Derrickson
- Dianna Angell
- Dina Ventura
- Donald Kilts & Craig Lupini
- Donna Scanlon
- Edward Paparella
- Elaine Finley & Indian River Drama Club
- Elizabeth Costello
- Elizabeth J. Murtough
- Elizabeth Jenison
- Elizabeth Sinclair Cady
- ESM High School Health Classes-Wayne Suddaby
- Garnsey General Construction
- Gerald Mager & Tom Brisk
- Gina Vigiotti
- Ginger Ruddock
- Gloria & Antonio Beccara
- Gracelyn Musci
- Hilary Davis & Qbd Youth Group
- Jack Condon & The Eventful Group
- Jackie Millard
- Jacqueline Wallace & SUNY Oswego
- James Fleming
- Jane Guiles
- Janice Harvey
- Jean Kessner
- Jeffery P. Dingman
- Jennifer Lashley
- Jennifer Woodman & BNY Mellon
- Jessica Clarke & Amnesty Club of Camden HS
- Joe Maxsewen
- Karen Keast
- Karen Pinnie
- Kate McElroy
- Kathryn A. Nickerson
- Kathy A. Miller
- Kathy Miller
- Kathy Zappala
- Katie Reed
- Katie Warner
- Keenan Lewis
- Kelly Johnson
- Kenneth Hudson
- Kerry Thomas
- Kevin & Paulette Quinn
- Kim Denby
- Kim VanDuren
- Krista Taskey & Design Specialists
- Lauri Clark
- Lenore Vaccarella
- Linda LeBlanc
- LizBeth Salvatore & TATF Club
- Lori Perrault
- Louise Tyo
- Lynne Elmer
- Margaret Wicks
- Marissa Rice
- Marsha Brunch
- Mary Anne Calogero
- Mary Bronner
- Mary Dealing
- Mary Doody
- Mary Horan
- Mary Jane O’Connor
- Mary Murphy & Denise Buford
- Maryrose Long
- Matt Michelelli & Richard Mackin
- Maureen M. Jones
- Maureen O’Neill
- Megan Wickham & MVCC Student & Residence Life Team
- Nancy Gardner
- Nancy LaFave
- Nancy Levine
- Nancy Murray
- Nancy Walker
- Nicole Gibson & Wendy Rene Fitzgerald
- Nicole Weaklaff & Colton-Pierrepont TATF
- Nina Santee & Global Billing Resolution
- Old Navy DeWitt & Destiny - Jennifer Plis
- Old Navy Great Northern Mall - Kim Rieppel
- Pat Knox
- Pat Tarbox-Ryan & Watertown High School
- Patricia Barber
- Patty Nolan
- Phyllis Creamer
- Rachael Wood
- Rachel Kgamma & Lighthouse of Love Ministries
- Rachel Leonardo
- Rachelle Luckette
- Ray Stoffel
- Family of Janet Ours
- Ray Van Cuyck
- Rick King
- Robbin Nicolosi
- Robert Caine
- Roxanna Fiore
- Sally McSweeney & Mary Cornelius
- Sandra L. Spencer-Florczyk
- Sandy Jarvis
- Sandy Murphy
- Sara Narrow-Lapoint
- Sharon Rantfle
- Shelly Marlow & Anchor QEA, LLC
- Starbucks - Armorey Square
- Starbucks - Fayetteville
- Susan Cook
- Syracuse Gay & Lesbian Chorus
- Tamaralene Shut
- Tanya Hicks & Syr. Area Black Nurses Association
- Teri Coon & Family
- Tessa Careaga
- The Rice Family
- Thea van der Veen
- Theone Kalkinis
- Therese A. Deegan
- Thomas Angiolillo
- Tim Annable
- Wil Murtlaugh & Bill Louer
- William Blake

Thank you for your kindness and your generous spirit.
For the past four years, Onondaga County has invested in Q Center youth and families with ONCARE funds. $60,000 we use to assist youth and families with mental health services, and to help the wider community understand LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) concerns.

The funding provides services for more than 200 Q Center youth and their parents or caregivers each year. Activities include:

- 1-on-1 non-clinical counseling sessions
- Referrals for clinical counseling
- LGBTQ youth support groups
- Parents/Caregivers for Trans* Youth support groups
- Quarterly family events
- Social events
- LGBTQ Cultural Competency workshops targeting mental health providers

"The ONCARE grant is priceless for us. We have no other source to pay for these comprehensive, constructive, and necessary services and referrals," said Marissa Rice, Youth Services Director. "The Cultural Competency workshops are particularly helpful for mental health providers and the general public."

Q Center Program Coordinator, Derek Villnave, gives three or four Cultural Competency presentations a month. The most common questions, he says, are about terminology regarding the LGBTQ community. The terminology is ever changing and people like to keep up with what they have heard. He says the biggest presentation he did was at Indian River Central School where 640 people attended. “Cultural competence enables a person to recognize the importance of a person’s life context,” said Villnave. “Understanding helps eradicate prejudice.”

If you or your organization is interested in learning more about LGBTQ concerns through Cultural Competency training, contact the Q Center at 315.701.2431.

Clean Your Closet, Help Our Clients

If you’ve been cleaning out closets and have household items and apparel you no longer want, please take them to the Rescue Mission, tell them you support ACR Health, and you’ll be helping Q Center youth and all our clients get needed clothing and other necessities. The Rescue Mission has developed vouchers, making clothing and household necessities available through the Thrifty Shopper stores for the people being served by ACR Health.

“Our clients will now be able to get the items they need - clothes, coats, winter boots, and household things, and Rescue Mission shelves will be restocked by donations from our supporters,” Carrie Portzline-Large, Development Director for ACR Health. “Both organizations and those we serve will benefit.”

Rescue Mission stores are located in Syracuse, at 155 Gifford Street, and in Auburn at 211 Melone Village.

You can help year round by taking unwanted clothing and household donations to Rescue Mission Attended Donation Centers; for a full listing of locations, visit cleanthatcloset.com.
Eddie Fund Party Gets an A+

The 4th Annual **Eddie Fund Party**, held at Laci’s on January 21, raised more than $5,000 dollars for the Eddie Future Greatness Fund at the Q Center. The Fund was established by community members Laura Serway, Cindy Seymour, and Paul Mahalick in memory of Eddie Kirsteins who passed away in January 2012 at the age of 31. Each year, Eddie Kirsteins’ parents Ed and Susie, lend their presence to the party held in their son’s name, keeping his memory alive by helping young people accomplish objectives he held but didn’t have time to achieve.

The first Eddie Fund Party was held in December of the year Eddie died. Since then, the Eddie Fund has raised $23,682 to support Q Center youth and their allies who strive for higher education and for those who have emergency needs.

This scholarship is dedicated to helping youth with the ambition to succeed. It is available to all LGBTQ youth and their allies, 16-26, who are registered in an accredited post secondary institution. Four $500 scholarships are awarded each year: two in the Spring semester (deadline March 16th) and two in the Fall semester (deadline September 16th). All applicants must identify as LGBTQ or an ally, and be between the ages of 16-26 years of age.

Apply at acrhealth.org/youth/eddie-scholarship

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AIDS QUILT
Squared Away with Good Advice

Denise Suncin of Syracuse University’s Lambda Pi Chi Sorority stopped by ACR Health Headquarters late one January afternoon with a gift for Mary Doody, ACR Health Director of Volunteers. Denise delivered an original AIDS Quilt composed of dozens of felt squares, each with a message from members of campus social organizations.

Denise says she hopes those who designed the squares follow their own advice. “I think it’s important for my generation to understand that pregnancy isn’t the only consequence of unprotected sex. Sex is such a taboo, even in this day and age, that people would just rather pretend STDs don’t exist and continue to be careless.”

Mary Doody and Denise Suncin admire the AIDS Quilt made by Lambda Pi Chi Sorority, Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity, and Lambda Alpha Upsilon Fraternity.
The first World AIDS Day was held in 1988, when AIDS was spreading like wildfire, people died daily, and those left behind found no comfort. As ACR Health commemorated World AIDS Day on December 1, 2015, a new day had dawned in New York State, where ACR Health is fully funded and fully dedicated to the AIDS Institute’s three point plan to End AIDS by 2020. ACR Health held World AIDS Day celebrations in Syracuse, Utica, and Watertown.

Syracuse - The Gay and Lesbian Chorus provided the melodies for a somber service of Hope and Remembrance at Panasci Chapel at LeMoyne College in Syracuse, as readers reminded those gathered of the painful history of HIV / AIDS and the need to keep traditions of remembering the fallen ever present.

Utica’s World AIDS Day commemoration started with a candle light vigil on Oneida Circle at 6:00; and then moved inside Cornerstone Church for a service of Hope and Remembrance. The program include a display of panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt and a personal story of an individual’s experience with HIV/AIDS.

Watertown - The event at the Jefferson Community College Commons featured audience participation in the form of balloon stomping. Red balloons were used to symbolize AIDS and at the end of the readings, the staff and audience each took a red balloon and “STOMPED out AIDS.”

We come together today
To remember with pride and appreciation,
dismay, sadness, and gratitude,
Those whose death has caused us loneliness and pain
We express our common humanity
And in our remembrance
We give thanks for memory itself

Nearly 37 million people are now living with HIV; 2.6 million are under the age of 15.
An estimated 2 million people were infected with HIV in 2014.
ACR Health offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation, marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.

ACR Health is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Follow us on:

Facebook  
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Pinterest  
United Way

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**February 21, 2016**
BLOWOUT “Once Upon a Time” Fantasy Hair Competition
3:00-6:00 p.m. at the Landmark Theatre in Syracuse.
events@ACRHealth.org

**April 24, 2016**
18th Annual AIDS Hike for Life
5K fundraising walk and timed run at 11:00 a.m. at Hamilton College.
AIDSwalkCNY.com

**June 5, 2016**
24th Annual AIDS Walk/Run
5K walk and 10K timed run at 10:00 a.m. at Beaver Lake Nature Center.
AIDSwalkCNY.com

**August 28, 2016**
Bubble Blast Run at the Great New York State Fair
At 10:00 a.m. Sunday, a bubbly fun run through the grounds of the New York State Fair. For registration information: events@ACRHealth.org

**Marketing Opportunities Available**
ACR Health has numerous fundraising and educational events in nine New York counties: Cayuga, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, and St. Lawrence. Sponsorship of ACR Health’s special events offers a marketing opportunity guaranteed to introduce thousands of area residents to your business all while publicizing your support of a good cause. Call Carrie Portzline-Large at 800.475.2430 or email events@ACRHealth.org to learn more.

**Build a Strong Neighborhood**
Want to host a giving party at your house and donate the proceeds to ACR Health? We can help you! Contact us today at 800.475.2430 or events@ACRHealth.org.

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION FORUMS**

Forums provide HIV education to community members and those interested in becoming volunteers. Events are held monthly in Syracuse and Utica. Call 800.475.2430 to sign up.

**LGBTQ YOUTH SUPPORT GROUPS**

ACR Health has numerous programs for LGBTQ youth, including support group meetings in Syracuse, Utica, Watertown, and the Mohawk Valley. Participants are grouped by ages from 8-26.

Facebook The Q Center for a full listing

Syracuse youth group meetings are at the Q Center, 617 West Genesee Street
Information: 315.701.2431 or qcenter@ACRHealth.org

Mohawk Valley: LGBTQ Youth Group in Little Falls
Information: 315.793.0661 ext. 133 or glbtqyouth@ACRHealth.org

Utica: The Q2 LGBTQ Youth Groups
Information: 315.793.0661 ext. 133 or glbtqyouth@ACRHealth.org

Watertown: Qbd LGBTQ Youth Group
Information: 315.785.8222 ext. 377

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