

May 2019

VERNON ROCKS COALITION

Your monthly news & updates

For this month's Vernon ROCKS Newsletter let's de-stigmatize mental health! Also be sure to keep reading for event updates, compliance checks results and a new segment where you can learn more about members of the coalition!

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." —Margaret Mead

[Visit our Website](#)

Break the Stigma this Mental Health Awareness Month

In 2016,
8.2 million adults
had both mental illness
and
substance use disorder
according to the
American Addiction
Center.

This May let's celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month and work together to decrease the stigma that is so often associated with mental health and substance abuse by educating ourselves and providing help.

Mental illness and substance abuse are often co-occurring issues for a person. Either can develop first, but using substances exacerbates mental illness. According to The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) people who are diagnosed with mood or anxiety disorders are **twice as**

likely to have a substance use disorder compared to the general public.

Mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, and PTSD **occur biologically in your brain**. Drug addiction is also a very real mental illness. NIDA states, "addiction results in distinct brain changes and can disrupt a person's 'hierarchy of needs and desires', leading them to prioritize drug use above all else". With these changes, a person's ability to control their compulsion to use substances becomes significantly diminished, leading to continued drug or alcohol use.

In most cases, a combination of issues may contribute to the development of

addiction and/or mental health disorders, including biology and genetics, trauma, environment and life experience (American Addiction Center).

Unfortunately, in the United States, mental illness and substance abuse are usually treated separately and not in a dual diagnosis program. Hopefully, by continuously researching and finding the best approaches, we can make the treatment of both more accessible for all.

Personally taking care of your own mental health is extremely important. In today's fast paced society it can be so easy to forget to take a step back and make sure your mind is right, but it is a necessary thing to do. Find an activity that you enjoy and devote some time each day so you get to clear your mind and recharge! [Click Here](#) for some simple self care ideas!

This month lets **#BreakTheStigma** that is often associated with the co-occurring disorders and be more accepting of things we might not understand or have ever been through. Anyone can be suffering through something that they may not vocalize in fear of judgement or persecution, so try to be sympathetic.

If you or someone you know is struggling know there are resources available and you are not alone and there is **no shame** in needing help!

Helplines

SAMHSA's National Helpline 1-800-622-HELP (4357)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255

CT Narcotics Anonymous 1-800-627-3543

CT Alcoholics Anonymous 1-866-STEPS12 (783-7712)

Event Updates

Upcoming Events

Rockville ROCKS!
FREE Community Block Party
to celebrate National Prevention Week

Come join us on **May 18th** for our second annual Rockville ROCKS Community Block Party.

We host this event in celebration of **National Prevention Week**, which is a week long observance created by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to promote **prevention efforts** for

Events Recap

DEA National Drug Take-Back Day

Many of our homes have unlocked medicine cabinets filled with all kinds of unneeded medications. But these highly addictive medications have a high risk of being misused by friends and family members. **70% of teens who abuse prescription drugs admit to getting them from family and friends.**

Safely disposing of unneeded medications is a sure way to make sure they do not get misused.



prescription and opioid drug misuse; drinking and alcohol misuse; illicit drug and tobacco misuse among youth; and suicide prevention. Look out for our social media posts regarding our daily prevention topics!

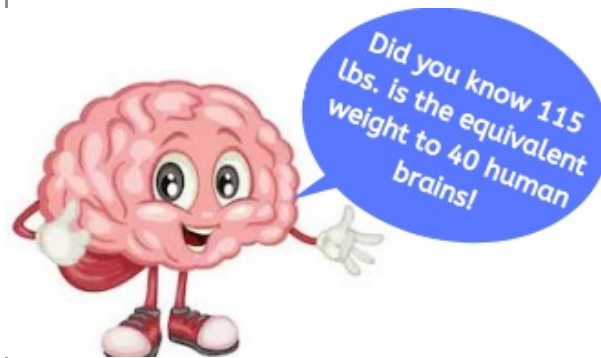
The block party will take place from 1 PM to 4 PM.

There will be crafts, games, face painting and bouncy houses! Food will be provided by [Little Mark's Big BBQ](#) food truck and [Kona's Shaved Ice](#). Be sure to go into our youth developed "Escape the Vape" escape room to learn about vaping. In addition, there will be numerous community resources and informational sessions including Hidden in Plain Sight and the Vernon Police K-9 unit.

It is open to the entire community **free of charge**. You can learn more about the event [HERE](#)

We hope you stop by!!

On April 27th the ROCKS coalition hosted our 4th Take Back Day. It was very successful with a whopping 115 pounds of unused prescription pills collected to be safely disposed of!!



Efforts like these are important for opioid use prevention; by limiting the access to pills and properly disposing of them it reduces access thus decreasing the likelihood of misuse and keeps our water and environment clean!!

Vaping Presentation

On April 29th we hosted a presentation for parents to discuss vaping. Parents learned what they are, how they work, the known dangers, and tips for prevention. Vaping is an emerging trend with youth but has some of the same harmful effects as traditional cigarettes. It is important for parents to understand what these devices are and be equipped with tools to talk to their teens.



Liquor Compliance Checks

Enforcement activities are a prevention strategy we use in the coalition to help decrease the youths' access to substances and ensure the laws are being followed. One way we do that is through alcohol compliance checks in partnership with the Vernon Police Department



and the CT Department of Liquor Control.

The checks ensure that Vernon package stores are not selling to minors and that older adults are not purchasing alcohol for minors. If the youth cannot access it, they can't use it.

In a study done by the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, compliance checks were effective in decreasing the likelihood that package stores would sell to minors after they had been checked by law enforcement and that it had a ripple effect, other package stores (within 125 m) whose neighbor was checked within the last 90 days were also less likely to sell alcohol to youth.

This year's compliance checks yielded great results with only two establishments selling to minors out of the 17 liquor retailers checked. In years prior, multiple package stores were non-compliant so it is encouraging to see that the Vernon package stores are changing their selling practices and becoming more socially responsible, helping improve the overall safety for youth in the Town of Vernon. Unfortunately, one package store was a multi-time offender, but the hope is that with the continued enforcement these establishments will learn that the risk of selling to minors is not worth it and be more thorough in their selling practices to ensure they are meeting the regulations of the Department of Liquor Control.

Coalition Corner

A new segment where you can get to know members of the coalition!



Cassie Zwarycz is the coalition's Youth Advocate.

She has Master's in Human Development and Family Studies from Uconn with a concentration in Prevention and Early Intervention.

Cassie plays a vital role in encouraging youth involvement to ensure we have their perspective and voices heard. She is instrumental in the Real Talk campaign as well as managing our social media accounts.

What is your favorite part about working for the Vernon ROCKS Coalition?

"My favorite part about working with the coalition is having the opportunity to work with such talented and intelligent youth members who bring new perspectives and creative ideas to the table"



Why do you do the work that you do?

"Prior to this position I had multiple jobs working with young children who didn't have a lot of opportunities and who faced adversity. I realized they have so much potential and it just takes one person to intervene, to help their lives go on a positive trajectory. I want to be able to influence youth in the community and the coalition allows me to do so."

What is your hope for the coalition?

"My hope for the coalition is that we are able to create effective change in the Vernon community and see people come together in new ways to reduce substance misuse overall"

In honor of mental health awareness month What is one way to de-stress and practice self care?

"I like to spend time outdoors, going for a hike or a relaxing day at the beach helps me get my mind off things."

If you or a loved one is having trouble with substance abuse check out the available resources in the area

[Get Help](#)

If you are aware of an underage party or illegal activity follow the link and submit the anonymous form below, and the Vernon ROCKS Coalition will work with the Vernon Police Department to prevent or stop the activity.

[Report it Here](#)

Are you are interested in becoming more involved with the Vernon ROCKS Coalition we are always looking for more members. You can join by visiting our website!

[Get Involved](#)