

July 2019

VERNON ROCKS COALITION

Happy 4th of July

Speak a word of affirmation at the right moment in a child's life and it's like lighting up a whole roomful of possibilities.— Gary Smalley

Our July Newsletter raises awareness for Minority Mental Health Month, addresses updates on the states opioid crisis, provides information on new states joining the list of those with legal recreational marijuana use and details from the Coalition's Annual Luncheon. Don't forget to check out the Coalition Corner to learn about this month's featured coalition member, Robin Kohler!



[Visit our Website](#)

Minority Mental Health Month

This July we need to raise awareness for Minority Mental Health Month, a month dedicated to bringing attention to the plight of minority mental health and the unique struggles they face. Mental illness is a nondiscriminatory affliction, impacting anyone regardless of demographics or background. There is a lot of stigma about mental health in general and unfortunately, marginalized segments of society face that

MINORITY POPULATIONS ARE LESS LIKELY TO RECEIVE DIAGNOSIS FOR THEIR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES AND HAVE LESS ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



stigma even more and do not receive the care, education, and help that the majority of the population does for mental health. We need to break the stigma so that *everyone* suffering the challenges of mental illness do not have to go through the unnecessary barrier of society's judgment and are able to find the right treatment that fits their personal life and multifaceted circumstances.

The State of Connecticut VS. Purdue Pharma



Purdue Pharma, the notorious Stamford-based drug manufacturer who created OxyContin, a form of oxycodone, is gearing up to defend itself against Connecticut and 5 other states in a lawsuit alleging that Purdue held a significant hand in the nation's and states' opioid epidemic. The CT lawsuit was filed by Attorney General William Tong in December of 2018 but recently was amended with a new complaint, as well as releasing the unredacted complaint filed against the OxyContin producers. In the 62-page complaint, Connecticut

Attorney General William Tong claimed members of the Sackler family, who sat on the Board of Purdue Pharma, and other companies held by the Sackler family, as defendants. Their crimes include several wrongdoings using deceptive strategies to market the drug despite their knowledge of its addiction and safety risks. They misinformed Connecticut patients to get more people to use OxyContin, misleading prescribers to write prescriptions for higher doses and for longer periods of time.

The Attorney General also just amended the complaint to include evidence that there was a fraudulent transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars from Purdue Pharma to the Sackler's in an attempt to avoid accountability to Connecticut victims of the opioid epidemic. In addition to the 6 states suing Purdue Pharma, thousands of local and tribal governments are going after Purdue for damages to their communities.

Oklahoma, which ranks 25th for opioid overdose-involved deaths according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, settled with Purdue for 270 million dollars in March. However, Connecticut is ranked in the top 10 states for opioid-related deaths, so our elected officials claim that our damages far exceed what Purdue was offering Oklahoma and we are demanding better reparations. You can read the official complaint [HERE](#).

Another State to Legalize Recreational Marijuana



Recreational marijuana use has now been legalized in 11 states in the United States and Washington D.C. On June 25th, Illinois joined that list and will legalize the use of recreational marijuana for those over the age of 21.

One thing that is different about this legalization than other states is that they are going to be using the benefits of sales to make reparations to communities that were targeted by the War on Drugs.

People who have faced criminal charges and convictions relating to minor cannabis crimes will be

expunged, the tax money gained from the legal sale of marijuana will be reinvested into the communities, and entering the legal market will be made easier for people from disproportionately targeted areas by waiving some of the fees for them.

Second Annual Vernon ROCKS Coalition Luncheon



On June 26th we held our Second Annual Luncheon at Angellino's Italian Restaurant. We organized the event to celebrate all the successes the coalition has accomplished throughout the year.

We took the time to honor our youth members who have worked diligently on the Real Talk Campaign, as well as the RHS 2019 Graduates who have helped us throughout the year. Our grant Evaluator provided a brief overview of the success of 2018 including our social media presence and our youth involvement, as well as our successful Drug Take-Back Days!



We also recognized our 2018 Coalition Member of the Year, Phil Bunick. We want to once again extend a warm THANK-YOU to everyone in the coalition who has made 2018 such a success and we are excited for what is to come!

Coalition Corner

Robin Kohler is the Site Director for KIDSAFE CT. She has been working there for 30 years!! Besides being the backbone



of KIDSAFE, Robin plays an instrumental role in the coalition! She is constantly signing up for extra sub-committees and engaging everyone in the group, as well as providing us with additional resources when we need it!

What is your favorite part about being a member of the coalition?

"I love the meetings, especially when the youth are there. It's a great group of people from different sectors of the community who each have a unique perspective and knowledge base to share. We all come together to work on a common mission that potentially saves lives."

What makes you do the work that you do?

"I have some personal history that led me to work in social services. At KIDSAFE, I don't spend every day providing direct service, but when I do there is a true satisfaction in being part of helping someone past a hurdle that is impacting their present and their future with their family. As Site Director, I am part of the bigger picture and play an important role in making sure others can get their jobs done. I have to admit the bright light of any day is seeing the children when they come into the office. They make every day wonderful!"

What is your hope for the coalition?

"I hope the coalition continues to attract new members and gain momentum. Providing awareness information and keeping the community informed is a big task. We need to keep the spotlight shining on underage drinking and drug abuse. It's an issue that impacts us all."



What has been your favorite event the coalition has done this year, why?

"I especially enjoy the Block Party. Being able to offer children and their parents a free day of fun and food is rare. Everyone is so appreciative and takes advantage of the opportunity to participate in all the activities as well as gather information from the different resource tables. It's a great way to kick-off National Prevention Week!"

What have you learned from the coalition?

"Being part of the coalition has given me insight I didn't have before about what's actually happening with the youth in our community. I knew that it was an issue but now I know it is truly a crisis and affects more youth than I had realized. I am now more aware of different methods for getting high and how easy drugs are to obtain. Most importantly, I have learned that working together is the best way to find a solution."

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

If you are aware of an underage party or illegal activity follow the link and

Are you are interested in becoming more involved with the Vernon ROCKS

resources in the area

submit the anonymous form below, and the Vernon ROCKS Coalition will work with the Vernon Police Department to prevent or stop the activity.

Coalition we are always looking for more members. You can join by visiting our website!

[Get Help](#)

[Report it Here](#)

[Get Involved](#)