

VERNON ROCKS COALITION

Happy August from the Coalition!

Enjoy this month's e-newsletter which contains exciting updates including a new Recovery Coach program in town, changes to Connecticut laws and of course, The Coalition Corner! As always, check out the event section to see where the coalition has been in town and read about International Overdose Awareness Day!

[Visit our Website](#)

"Action without vision is only passing the time, vision without action is merely daydreaming, but vision with action can change the world." - Nelson Mandela

21 and Over for Tobacco Sales Effective in October



Beginning October 1st, Connecticut will be among 15 states and hundreds of communities who have taken a proactive approach at reducing tobacco/cigarette use among youth. The state's new law will prohibit businesses from selling products such as cigarettes, cigars, or chewing tobacco and vaping products to people younger than 21. Prior, the legal age was 18. This law was passed in hopes to reduce smoking and vaping among teens.

The Truth Initiative reported that in 2017, 7.9% of high school students in Connecticut smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days. The new law hopes to help reduce that number. According to a 2015 report from the National Academy of Medicine, if the minimum age were increased to 21, tobacco use would decrease by the time teens reached adulthood, smoking-related deaths would decrease, and smoking initiation would be reduced. This law is a big win and will not only help individuals but the state as a whole. Smoking-related health care costs \$2.03 billion per year in CT alone (Truth Initiative). By reducing the number of smokers we reduce the amount we need to spend on preventable health issues.

When it comes to youth tobacco use, prevention is key. Teenage cigarette use is a slippery slope for lifetime tobacco use, in fact, 94% of adult smokers had their first cigarette before turning 21, and 81% had it before age 18 (lung.org). This is due in part to Big Tobacco's marketing tactics which are geared specifically for young people, and is compounded with the peer pressure youth face in high school.

The Senate passed the bill with overwhelming support. Sen. Mae Flexer, D-Killingly said "Increasing the age of being able to purchase tobacco products ... is going to dramatically cut the number of young people who start smoking in our state"... "It's also going to dramatically cut the number of young people who start to use vaping products. As we've seen in recent years, those numbers are skyrocketing."

The introduction of this law will hopefully be a means for ending tobacco use in teens and adults altogether!

New Rockville General Hospital Recovery Coach

We are proud to announce that ECHN's Rockville General Hospital, through the CT Community for Addiction Recover (CCAR), will be providing the community with Recovery Coach services! Recovery Coaches work with people who are trying to achieve sobriety by supporting them and providing resources that might be unknown to them, making their transition to recovery easier and more manageable. This is exciting news on the road to make Vernon a Recovery Friendly Community.



Vernon is modeling the program after The HOPE Initiative in Manchester, as well as, Gloucester Massachusetts, and Scarborough Maine. This model partners the hospital, the Police Department and recovery supports to help increase the number of people getting into treatment and recovery. The premise of the program is to reduce the rates of arrest for minor drug offenses and help get people on the path to recovery. Vernon Police will use their discretion with individuals facing arrest or criminal charges for drugs/alcohol to offer them to be taken to the Emergency Room and be paired with a Recovery Coach instead of being arrested. In 2018, 1,017 people lost their lives due to an opioid overdose in Connecticut alone. This program will hopefully provide people with the resources and support they need to get help, instead of keeping them in an endless cycle.

Check out the featured news article [HERE](#) to learn more!

Events Update

[National Night Out](#)



On August 6th the Coalition attended National Night Out (NNO) in Vernon. NNO is an annual nationwide event to promote partnership and build community ties between first responders and the community they serve. Vernon ROCKS and Real Talk members had a table to provide awareness and education about substance

[Park and Rec Summer Camp](#)



Over the course of the summer, the Coalition has partnered with the Vernon Parks and Rec Department summer camp

use and ways to prevent youth substance use.



to implement fun, educational activities for the teens in the camps. Emily, our Peer Advocate, created the engaging activities for the campers to educate them on the dangers of engaging in substance use, as well as healthy alternatives. Games included Drug Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, and a Substance Use Knock-Out Basketball game.

International Overdose Awareness Day August 31st

International Overdose Awareness Day is held across the world on August 31st to raise awareness of overdose, memorialize those we've lost to addiction and reduce the stigma associated with it. According to IOAD globally, there is an estimated minimum of 190,900 premature deaths caused by drugs. Learn more about the day [here](#).



Coalition Corner



Holly Hansen serves as the Coalition's Substance Abuse Prevention VISTA. She has a Bachelor's in Sociology and a Bachelor's in International Studies with a focus in Global Development from The University of Hartford. Starting in Fall 2019 she will be attending UCONN's School of Social Work to earn her MSW with a concentration in Community Organizing. Holly's primary focus for the coalition is on Opioid Use Disorder; increasing the coalition's capacity and

providing training and presentation materials for the coalition and community. August will be her last month serving as the coalition's VISTA.

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

"My favorite part about the coalition is definitely the information and research that goes behind everything we do. The field of substance use

prevention is constantly changing so staying up to date and constantly learning is what I enjoyed the most."

What is your hope for the coalition?

"With this being my last month working as the VISTA, my hope is ultimately that it will continue to grow and it will be able to infiltrate the youth that truly need it. Right now we have a truly amazing group of kids who participate in the coalition, but they aren't the youth who need these resources. We need to get better at targeting the segment of the population that doesn't know how to reach us or doesn't want to just yet. We need to ensure they know we are here to help when they are ready. I will continue to follow the coalition's journey and I can't wait to see how else Vernon ROCKS will continue to make effective change!"

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

"My favorite event has been the Narcan training. I think it was the most effective event to get the information and resources into the hands of people that genuinely needed them."



What have you learned from the coalition?

"Working with the coalition this past year has been an amazing experience and I feel I have learned so much about so many different aspects. Every day I was experiencing or finding out something new, so it is very difficult to pinpoint one thing that I have learned. One of my major takeaways the coalition has taught me is the vast amount of components and people that go into solving a problem. Prior to being in the coalition, I was naive and had the mentality of 'oh we can easily solve the problem this way or that way, why is it so hard?'. Now working and seeing the problem through so many different perspectives, it has enlightened me to just how much of a community problem this is and that it takes multiple people to make effective change happen. Ultimately, I am so thankful for the ample opportunities that this coalition has allowed for me to learn and grow throughout this past year. I have met incredibly devoted and inspirational people along the way and I feel so fortunate to have been a part of it."

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](#)