

# Lifeline

News from the  
**Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County**

**Vol. V Number 1**

**September 2003**

## Celebrating Health September is Recovery Month

**B**y proclamation of the Delaware County Board of Supervisors and others, September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, a time dedicated to the promotion of recovery, to applaud the courage of people in recovery, and recognize the contributions of treatment providers.

Tommy G. Thompson, secretary of Health and Human Services, recently announced: "I am privileged to join in promoting this year's theme - "Join the voices of Recovery: Celebrating Health."

"Substance abuse is a national tragedy," Thompson continued. "Access to substance abuse treatment services is a compassionate public policy and a sound investment." President Bush has pledged a \$1.6 billion increase in Federal funding for substance abuse treat-

ment over five years, the secretary added.

In Delaware County, Recovery Month is recognized by such agencies as the Delaware County Mental Health Clinic and the Delaware County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services.

"Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction have devastating health and societal consequences" said David Ramsey, executive director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County (ADAC). "It causes tens of thousands of deaths each year and takes an enormous economic toll—several hundred billion annually.

"But substance abuse can be successfully treated," he added.

Locally, several events are scheduled to celebrate Recovery Month. On September 7 a local advocacy group, Friends of Recovery, Delaware and Otsego

(FOR-DO) will sponsor a picnic to "celebrate addiction recovery," from 4 to 8 pm at the Hanford Mills Museum in East Meredith. The event will feature recovery speakers sharing their stories, music, food and refreshments, and free museum admission and tour.

On September 24 the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council will hold its annual dinner at SUCO in Oneonta in conjunction with LEAF, its counterpart in Otsego County. (See page 3 for details.) The guest speaker will be Stacia

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## Four Seasons Extends Adventure Programming

Ricardo Sierra, Sun Dog Adventure Programs Coordinator, has announced a new wilderness program for this fall that will present participants with "more challenges, adventure and survival skills."

"Our Four Seasons Program takes Sun Dog participants into new areas of study," Sierra continued.

"We will be at different locations throughout Delaware County to practice skills like gathering useful wild plants for food and tools, cooking skills, animal tracking, shelter building, weather and first aid and much more.

"Each skill, comes with many new lessons. Trees, plants,

*continued on page 2*



**Sun Dog Adventure campers gather around a fire they started without matches. At right, the Four Seasons program logo.**

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**LIFELINE**

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72 Main Street • Delhi NY 13753

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**Mission Statement**

**The Alcohol and  
Drug Abuse Council of  
Delaware County (ADAC)  
is dedicated to  
the prevention of alcohol  
and substance abuse  
by providing  
education, information,  
and referral services.**

Letter from the Director

**AS A NATION** we know that drug and alcohol abuse increases – often dramatically – in times of stress and anxiety. This is particularly true among substance abusers who are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and who also have a co-occurring mental disorder.

Unfortunately, as a nation we are ill-equipped to meet the needs of men and women with substance abuse disorders, let alone those with co-occurring disorders. Because failure to diagnose substance abuse disorders is commonplace, it should come as no surprise that physicians might fail to detect it in a person presenting symptoms of a mental disorder.

Even when co-occurring disorders are properly diagnosed, treatment is often fragmented. In many locations there are two separate systems of treatment, one for those with substance abuse disorders and another for those with mental disorders. Yet we know that treatment is most effective when the needs of the whole person are addressed.

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s *Report to Congress* on the subject underscores this point: “If one of the co-occurring disorders goes untreated, both usually get worse...The combination of disorders can result in poor response to traditional treatments, and increases the risk for other serious medical problems.”

September is Recovery Month, a fitting time to dedicate ourselves to encouraging alcohol and drug addiction treatment for all those in need, including the millions of Americans who have co-occurring disorders.

And make no mistake: treatment is effective and recovery is possible. This is one problem we can do something about.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

*“My own experience has led me to work to combat the number one public health issue facing our country: chemical addiction. Expanding access to treatment is a matter of life and death for 26 million Americans.”*

**Jim Ramstad**

**member, U.S. House of Representatives (Minnesota)  
and “a grateful recovering alcoholic.”**

Adventure Camp (continued)

weather, ecology and biology all play important roles in understanding how to master a skill. For example, learning to make a fire leads us to learning about trees that are good woods to use for our bow and drill sets.

“Learning about cottonwood or aspen trees leads us to the river, to wet environments, where these trees grow straight and tall, with plenty of sunlight and water for fast growth. Being around water lets us learn about beavers, raccoons, crayfish,

trout, water purification, water safety and much more.

“All of these things directly contribute to our learning about nature and especially about fire-making.”

Call Ricardo Sierra at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council (746-8300) to get on our mailing list so you will know when we are having our next Sun Dog Adventure Program!

Directions to the adventure program will be included, and there is no cost to attend.

## Most Alcoholism Goes Untreated... Why?

by Eric Goplerud

**A** recent study from the RAND Corporation, reported in the June 26th issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, found that alcoholism -- an illness that is the third leading cause of preventable death in this country -- goes largely untreated. The study indicates that the quality of care for alcohol is abysmal, that screening is not routinely done, and that, when identified, patients aren't being referred to treatment specialists. And this isn't surprising.

What's keeping people from getting the treatment they need? Like many things, it has mostly to do with money. Alcohol treatment is singled out for particularly harsh coverage limits by health plans and insurers, making proper medical management of these illnesses financially impossible. This deters hospitals and physicians from aggressively screening for the condition and referring patients for care. Why bother when there is no way to pay for the treatment?

While many states pass laws require that private health insurance companies cover various illnesses and injuries, we found, in our own study, that the largest health plans in one third of the states did not even meet the minimum statutory requirements for coverage of alcohol treatment. Worse, state laws actually discourage the health system from doing its job. Insurance laws in 38 states exempt insurers from having to pay for treatment costs if a person is injured while under the influence of alcohol.

Public health insurance programs often miss the mark. Medicare requires patients pay 50 percent of the costs for outpatient alcohol treatment, but only 20 percent for other illnesses. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which provides health insurance for millions of poor children, does not require coverage of alcohol treatment, despite high rates of alcohol problems among youth.

We can afford to do a lot better. For example, the 9 million government workers and their families covered by the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program have equitable coverage. The cost to the program has been insignificant, an increase of far less than 1 percent of the premium. Covering treatment for alcohol problems the same as other illnesses would increase costs by only \$5.11 per person per year - about the same at two latte's at Starbucks.

What the businesses and insurance communities do not seem to realize is that the longer alcohol

problems go untreated, the more costly it is to the patient, to the family, to the workplace, and, ultimately, to the taxpayer. The annual bill for treating alcohol-related illnesses and injuries is close to \$20 billion.

But that's just a fraction of the \$185 billion drained from America's coffers each year to cover the costs generated by alcohol-related problems -- costs resulting from accidents, illness, hospital fees, and unproductive missed work days. It becomes a vicious cycle, when in fact, an investment in treatment would actually bring down both costs and the number of alcohol-related problems.

Companies and government should encourage treatment by investing in coverage. Pinched by rapidly escalating health care costs, the RAND researchers have pointed them toward a real opportunity: investing in increased access to quality alcohol treatment is good medicine and good economics.

*Eric Goplerud, Ph.D., is the executive director of Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems at the George Washington University Medical Center; a project to increase access to alcohol treatment.*

"What's keeping people from getting the treatment they need?...It has mostly

**The opinions in this commentary are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the views of ADAC.**



### **ADAC ANNUAL DINNER** "an addiction recovery celebration"

September 24

Morris Complex, SUCO, Oneonta  
reception 6.30 pm; buffet dinner 7 pm

Guest Speaker

**STACIA A. MURPHY**  
**Executive Director**

**National Council on Alcoholism  
and Drug Dependence (NCADD)**

Tickets: \$20

Reserve by September 22:  
call 746-8300

**Become a  
Friend of the Council**

## Recovery Month/continued from page 1

### APPLICATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

There is no charge to become a Friend of the Council. Voluntary contributions, however, are welcomed and are tax deductible.

CONTRIBUTION \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Make checks payable to ADAC)

Return this form to the  
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council  
72 Main Street, Delhi, NY 13753

Murphy, President of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD). Prior to her appointment in 1999, she was the Executive Director of NCADD's New York Affiliate, the Alcoholism Council of New York, for fifteen years. She provided direction and oversight to the work of the Council that included advocacy, intervention, prevention and policy issues related to alcohol and other drugs.

Other work experience includes management training and program development in the criminal justice system, private industry and academia. She has worked extensively in the United States and abroad in programs and systems related to youth, adolescent and community development, community organizing and public policy. Ms. Murphy taught management and organizational development at The New School

University for nineteen years.

### Facts from the NCADD

- There are more deaths and disabilities each year in the U.S. from substance abuse than from any other cause.
- About 18 million Americans have alcohol problems; about 5 to 6 million Americans have drug problems.
- More than half of all adults have a family history of alcoholism or problem drinking.
- More than nine million children live with a parent dependent on alcohol and/or illicit drugs.
- One-quarter of all emergency room admissions, one-third of all suicides, and more than half of all homicides and incidents of domestic violence are alcohol-related.
- Heavy drinking contributes to illness in each of the top three causes of death: heart disease, cancer and stroke.
- Almost half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related.
- Between 48% and 64% of people who die in fires have blood alcohol levels indicating intoxication.

# LifeLine

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County  
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**(607)746-8300**

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## Annual Dinner: September 24 (details page 3)