

PANDEMIC COLLIDES with EPIDEMIC

By Darren Caparaso, M.D., Co-Director of Embrace Recovery Buffalo

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous effect on our families, communities, and healthcare system. Those on the frontlines as healthcare workers have felt the brunt of it on a daily basis. The consequences of this pandemic have had a particularly devastating impact on those suffering from **substance and alcohol use disorder**.

The intense isolation has exacerbated uncertainty, stress, **anxiety, and depression** leading to a dramatic increase in drug/alcohol usage and unfortunate relapses for those who were doing well. These challenges emerge as the public health crisis of addiction collides with the pandemic. More than 40 states have reported escalations in opioid related mortalities as well as an ongoing mental health crisis. The prevalence of anxiety disorder alone was roughly **3x** more than reported last year. In December 2020, an official Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Health Alert Network Advisory to medical and public health professionals announced that drug overdose deaths have **SOARED TO THE HIGHEST NUMBER EVER** recorded in a 12 month period. Approximately 81,230 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending May 2020, with the largest spike after the COVID-19 public health emergency started from March 2020 to May 2020. Erie County has seen a **50% increase in overdose deaths in 2020**.

Despite all the overwhelming sad, heart wrenching news, I want you to know there is **good news**. I am very encouraged by witnessing people reach out for help and see their lives becoming restored and whole again. People that once felt unwanted, unloved, and helpless are finding compassion, hope and healing.

I believe the key to success is found in clinical and community **care**

teams in a growing regional **"HUB AND SPOKE MODEL"** of care launched from a University at Buffalo Fellowship Project. A collaborative effort of our medical community includes treatment plans with evidence-based **Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)**, for example: buprenorphine, naltrexone/Vivitrol, acamprosate and effective medications for anxiety and depression. The courageous help and support of our trained life recovery coaches and community group connections has allowed people to break the chains and downward spiral of addiction and mental health problems. In my opinion, these treatment plans are just as important as plans for other conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

We as Buffalonians are truly a **"City of Good Neighbors"**. I love the word **EMBRACE** because I believe that is what people need now more than ever, as we reach into the lives of those in trouble and bring them close to our hearts. **We all have opportunities of becoming a good Samaritan and as Jesus taught us---to love one another.**

Healthcare providers, students and care teams experience firsthand how proper medication with counseling and community support is life transformative. People sharing their life stories brings our team great joy and will be remembered forever. My hope is that we see even more breakthroughs and together we can continue to change hearts and minds by wiping out ignorance, prejudice, and the stigma that cast a shadow over people that desperately need our help. Hurting people deserve the best, most compassionate care that we all expect, **always** treated with love, dignity and respect.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." - Matthew 11:28

2012 – 2020* OPIOID RELATED DEATHS
ERIE COUNTY



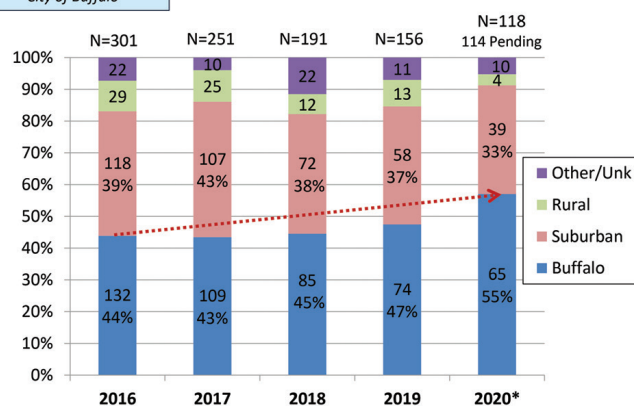
SOURCE: ERIE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE, *CLOSED CASES REPORTED THRU 12/31/2020



SUBURBAN TOWNS:
AMHERST
CHEEKTOWAGA
CLARENCE
GRAND ISLAND
HAMBURG
LACKAWANNA
LANCASTER
ORCHARD PARK
TONAWANDA
WEST SENEGA

RURAL TOWNS:
ALDEN
AURORA
COLDEN
COLLINS
CONCORD
EDEN
ELMA
EVANS
GOWANDA
HOLLAND
MARILLA
NEWSTEAD
NORTH COLLINS
SARDINIA

2016 – 2020* PERCENT OF ERIE COUNTY
OPIOID RELATED DEATHS
BY RESIDENCE



SOURCE: ERIE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE, *CLOSED CASES REPORTED THRU 11/9/2020

Educate, Equip and Engage



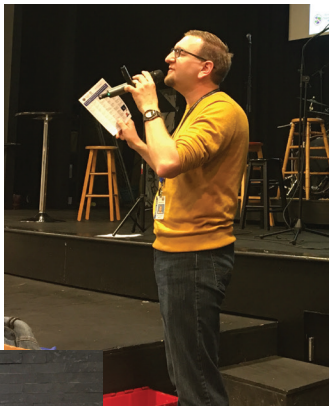
Getting Experience on the Frontlines

University at Buffalo Medical Students Eric Vu and Katie Mazurek work with Dr. Caparaso and Recovery Coaches



Equipping Nurses and Students that care

Erie County Task Force Educating at Watermark Wesleyan Church



Engaging Coaches... Making a Lasting Impact



Corona Virus Places Additional Burdens on Those Struggling with Addiction

By Monica A. Farrar, LMHC, CRC, CASAC (NY) LPC, CSAC (VA)
Co-Director of Embrace Recovery Buffalo

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is hitting us all very hard in many different ways, including stress, depression, anxiety, escalating unemployment rates, and of course, death. One of the groups hardest hit, however, are those already struggling under the weight of opioid addiction.

We know addiction thrives in isolation, and that personal connection nurtures recovery. Enhancing our emotional, social and spiritual wellness by surrounding ourselves with others who understand us – including community providers, church communities, and supportive family and friends – has been difficult due to government and health department COVID distancing recommendations.

Those in recovery are now experiencing much more difficulty due to stress, which has long been identified as a common trigger for those at risk of relapse. High levels of stress lead to poor coping choices.

As a result, we need to focus on making it much easier for people to get the help they need and get it as quickly as possible.

Let's reach out more than ever to those who are struggling with addiction and provide them with resources so that they are not alone or forgotten during this dual crisis of corona virus and addiction.

The opioid crisis hasn't gone away. It has just moved into the background due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

RE:GENERATION

Meetings at 6:30pm on Thursdays at Eastern Hills Church, 8445 Greiner Rd., Williamsville.



Regeneration is a recovery ministry for all hurts, habits and hang-ups. Through a Christian based 12-step study, a New Life in Christ is born.

Using the Regeneration workbooks given with the teachings of the scriptures, personal reactions to situations are uncovered that lead to healing.

"After losing my son to overdose, I turned to God not for the "Why", however, for the "What". As I continued with the Regeneration ministry, I was able to peel back the layers of my grief, loss, guilt and sorrow, begin to heal and live my life as God intended. To love others as we have been loved by Him.

The Regeneration Ministry has changed my life, healed hurts and has given me new Hope.

No matter the situation, I am assured Jesus' love for me and his presence in the darkest of night."

Be blessed, Angela (Recovery Coach)

Through this Christian 12-step program, I rediscovered that it is God's ways, not mine, that led to freedom. Regeneration is God's work. He allowed me to see my sin and His grace through the cross, leading me out of hiding, and giving me His perspective and His tools to deal with the hurts and pains that had me stuck. His powerful invitation remains for any who would answer the call to "Come, follow me." I am so glad that I did. -- **Chad**

COACHING

By Pastor Frank Montileone (Recovery Coach)

In spite of the pandemic, Embrace Recovery Buffalo has continued to make strides by ongoing coaching and mentoring. We are currently planning to go out to rehab centers (i.e. ECMC) where the recovery coaches could meet individuals who need the help of a coach to work with them.

We also have the opportunity to teach University at Buffalo medical students' faith-based teachings that combine the medical with Christian perspectives. They have opportunities to go on field trips to facilities that correspond with the medical profession. Some of these facilities are: Total Freedom, Teen Challenge, Saving the Michaels, City Mission and many more.

Embrace Recovery Buffalo is on the move and doing their part in order to turn lives around through ministering to their spirit, soul, and body.



Connecting UB Medical Students to Community Ministry

GROUND ZERO

By Pastor Mark Robshaw (Recovery Coach)

Ground Zero started with high expectations and weekly we have been growing and helping many people overcome life threatening issues. Our region has been seeing suicide and overdose rates spike this year. People have come to Ground Zero after many overdoses looking for help. People have come telling us that they are on their last leg and they are feeling suicidal. Depression has been a major issue to deal with here. Those people are now smiling again. They are feeling hope once more.

Ground Zero is being directed by Pastor Mark Robshaw who has gone through many of those same life issues himself and has a real heart for all of those people. He has stated, "I really feel that we are totally in step with God. Jesus came to set people free and to heal the broken hearted. That is exactly what is happening at Ground Zero".

Ground Zero is a kingdom minded ministry which has people who are seeking success in recovery coming from all around Western New York. All are welcome at Ground Zero and there is no cost associated with coming. Ground Zero holds its meetings each Tuesday night at 7pm. WE are located within the Bread of Life Church at 1638 South Park Avenue in Buffalo, NY. Our doors are opened to everyone, Ground Zero is effective because God never fails.

If you would like to help or need help, please call (716) 827-7866 and ask for Pastor Mark. God bless you all. Love God and love people.

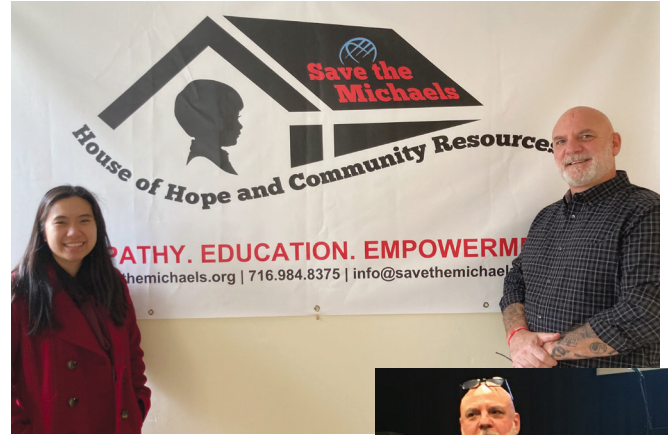


Pastor Mark



Marina, RN

Embracing Our Community



Save the Michaels of The World



UB Medical Student visits Total Freedom



UB Medical Students learning about City Mission



*Teen Challenge
Sharing at
Watermark
Wesleyan Church*

CHANGED LIVES...WORTH IT ALL!

I feel so BLESSED to have you in my life. You ALL have been so wonderful to me. These are hard different times for us all, it's so nice to have those who understand and listen in a loving, caring way. *Thank you, Kim*

I have struggled with anxiety and depression throughout my adult life. I tried counseling, self-help books, medication, everything. It wasn't until Jesus took hold that I finally found the path to recovery. With medical help, faith, medicine and recovery doctors...it put me on the path to wholeness in Christ. *James*

Ever since I included God into my recovery, I've actually have found RECOVERY. Studying His word and implementing it into my life, gives me life. I thank God every day for the doctors and the staff. Jesus really does save! *Robin*

The people and the doctors are great, and they only want to see you do good and live a happy life. The meds help a lot, but it is the people that are here to help and people you surround yourself with that truly makes things happen! *Thanks again, Ryan*

The team helped me keep my head above water. They care and will listen to me; with my effort and their support, I've got my life back. *Brady*

This has been a turning point in my life. Allowing my mind and spirit open up to pleasant experiences that we all deserve in "life". I'm Free!!! *I thank you, Matt*

I want to express sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation on behalf of my family and myself for your care for David. It has been and remains an incalculable benefit to him and the entire family and appreciated deeply by the whole family. God Bless. *Sincerely, Frank*

We all have a story and, properly told, each of these stories can reach out to touch the hearts of those listening...

Forty years is a long time to struggle with an addiction. Forty years of secrecy, of hiding behind closed doors. Forty years of working full time yet planning my next drink. Forty years of expecting that my family ignore and hide my truth...

Years passed. Marriage, children, work, and the awful secret of hidden addiction... Eventually, retirement came. With so much time and little responsibility, my drinking escalated. Cycling in and out of bingeing, being ill (hangover), and the resulting depression, I realized that I was well on my way to destroying myself. It was only a matter of time. I had been told of the drug, Naltrexone, and its value. I asked my primary care physician for a script, knowing the seriousness of my situation. She refused, saying she was uncomfortable...After several instances of falling, trips to emergency care and a bout of pneumonia, she finally sent me to a physician in her own group.

There is something miraculous about having one's life saved. It was like a curtain being drawn. Naltrexone worked immediately for me, much to my stunned disbelief. But it was not only the medicine but the powerful faith component that provided a hope that I had long since abandoned; the combination of my doctor's absolute acceptance of me and his recognition of the worth that I still have as a human being and the value I have to offer... After so many years of failure I am no longer planning my next drink, waiting for "the other shoe to drop." The vital elements of faith and a loving God are intrinsically linked to my continued sobriety. I have no question about the truth of that.

Any and all of you seeing this are welcome to join me in my continued walk with sobriety. There is strength and comfort in numbers. *Jean*

Gifts Given to Healthcare Providers, Students, Organizations, Ministries, Patients, and Families

Your generous giving provides **FREE** Biblical resources. By partnering in financial giving, more **Life Recovery Bibles, Promise Books, and Journals** will be in the hands of people who are grasping for hope and **will help train and equip Life Recovery Coaches** to go out and serve WNY.

Thank you for your prayers and support in this life-saving, life-giving mission.

Gratefully, The Embrace Recovery Buffalo Team



Please prayerfully consider giving to ERB so we can continue to help those in need.

Need Help? or Want to Help?

CONTACT US



cmdaofwny.org



embracerecoverybuffalo@gmail.com



716-250-9831 (Monica)

Embrace RECOVERY
BUFFALO

ERB CO-DIRECTORS

Darren Caparaso, MD

Monica Farrar, LMHC, CASAC, CRC, LPC & CSAC

a ministry of **Christian Medical & Dental Associations®**
Changing Hearts in Healthcare

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Credit Card:

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- Click **Embrace Recovery Buffalo**

Check:

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Please include Ministry #42485 in memo section of check

Mail checks to:

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PO BOX 7500

BRISTOL, TN 37621-9920

SCAN QR Code:



*Thank you
for your
generous
support!*

Embrace Recovery Buffalo is a CMDA of WNY ministry that is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is tax deductible.