

Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach Provides Support for People and Families Suffering from Addiction

A grassroots support group of parents who have lost children to the growing opioid epidemic and other community members touched by addiction has sprouted up in Weymouth. Although closely aligned with other community resources, such as the Town of Weymouth's Substance Abuse Prevention Team, they are a distinct group of volunteers

who provide information and support for people and their families suffering from addiction.

"Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach is a group of community members and residents that have been impacted by substance use disorder and addiction either in our homes or the broader community," said Darlene Mersereau, who lost a son to an overdose in 2016. "This is something that is very important to me and very close to my heart."

Other members of the group include service providers or people who have had personal connections with addiction,

Continued on page 2



A Chinese dragon dances at the August Moon Festival.

Quincy Asian Resources Serves and Empowers the Asian Community of the South Shore

Quincy Asian Resources, Inc., or QARI, recently celebrated sixteen years of serving the Asian community of Quincy and the greater South Shore. As the largest multi-service agency for the Asian population on the South Shore, QARI supports up to 100 people a day at their four Quincy sites helping them with bilingual services; referrals to social service agencies; information on setting up accounts for their utilities; and a myriad of other services for a largely immigrant community.

Continued on page 4

Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce Promotes the Peninsula as a Year-Round Destination

Founded in 1927, the Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce [www.hullchamber.com] (HNCC) has been an advocate for its over 100 members as well as an effective promoter of the seaside community. Situated on the ocean, the chamber has also served as a makeshift tourism board with an active website for tourists and beach goers with thousands of hits a year. Well known as a beach destination during

the summer, the HNCC has worked tirelessly to promote Hull as a popular spot for fun, food and cultural attractions for all seasons. They host several town-wide events throughout the year that bring over 13,000 visitors and participants to the South Shore town.

"We've always been the voice of the business community in town. Even though we are a small town, we do have dozens and dozens of small business owners, restaurants, shops and other services that we represent," said Patricia Abbate, President of HNCC and Publisher of the South Shore Senior News.

Because the area is seasonally based, businesses have a tougher time sustaining themselves during the winter months. "We're

Continued on page 6

Keohane

FUNERAL HOME
Quincy, MA

McDonald Keohane

FUNERAL HOME
Weymouth, MA

Pyne Keohane

FUNERAL HOME
Hingham, MA

Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach Provides Support for People and Families Suffering from Addiction

Continued from page 1

either personally, in their families, or the community at large — and all are volunteers. “We all have skin in the game, and want to change the dialog around substance abuse,” said Mersereau. “I believe the most significant barrier to changing the tide of this epidemic is stigma. We have to stop allowing stigma to shape the discussions around Substance Use Disorder. We have to stop allowing people to struggle with and die from treatable disorders and preventable deaths.”

“For me, I struggled with that. My son became addicted to drugs at an early age, and I felt as if we had given him a lot of information, and he should have been able to make better choices,” said Mersereau. “But it wasn’t a choice for him. Like many teenagers, he experimented — he was one of those teenagers who couldn’t walk away from that experimentation. Many adults have the same problem. And that is the difference between drugs, which is a choice, and drug addiction, which is when someone has a pre-disposition emotionally or physically for destructive drug use which becomes an addiction.”

As a mother, she had to realize that her son wasn’t addicted because of a bad choice, but that he had a real illness that required real medical and emotional interventions. Mersereau also claimed that the current crisis around opioid addiction is more devastating than past drug use among teens and other community members.

Many people thought using opioids recreationally was safe because they are legal drugs, or they started with a legitimate prescription for the drug as a pain killer. When those people could no longer get the prescription drug, they often turned toward heroin or fentanyl, a deadly synthetic opioid many times stronger than heroin.

“We need a medical and social response that deals with both the physical and emotional manifestation of SUDs [Substance Use Disorder] which is accessible at the community level. It’s time to stop punishing people for their



The 2017 Overdose Awareness and Memorial Vigil at Bradford Hawes Park in Weymouth.

worst choices and start supporting them towards their best lives,” said Mersereau.

Born of Personal Pain

The group began as a compliment to services provided to the town, such as the Substance Abuse Prevention Team. “They have their initiatives and activities, but we felt as community members that people who have been most deeply impacted needed something that communicated with them on a community to community level,” said Mersereau.

Last year, an online support group of bereaved parents of which Mersereau is a part decided to look at ways to fight the opioid epidemic in their local communities. Her group of South Shore parents reached out to Senator Patrick O’Connor to offer help in addressing the epidemic. The group invited the senator to the town’s annual awareness night at the high school in May, but he was unable to attend that evening due to other conflicts. However, he offered to meet with them another time. His chief of staff reached out quickly and set up a time for the senator to meet with the concerned parents at Weymouth Town Hall.

“We realized there were a great number of Weymouth parents and community members who were feeling that there was a void. So, we sat down with Sen. O’Connor and that’s when we decided to do the vigil in August,” said Mersereau.

While Weymouth has their own initiatives, a town government is more bound by certain policies and procedures than a grassroots organization. **“For us that are in the community and that are struggling, we just need somebody to connect with that can offer a listening ear, some support, and some resources,” said Mersereau.**

To reach out directly to the community, the Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach created a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/WeymouthCommunityAwareness]. The group uses the Facebook page as a platform to share information about treatment options; legislation; grief support; family support; trainings; and other resources.

Group members will meet directly with community members who reach out via the Facebook page for support and information. “I’ve sat down and had coffee

Continued on page 3

Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach Provides Support for People and Families Suffering from Addiction

Continued from page 2

with parents who have lost children or are struggling with their actively addicted child — or even parents whose children are in recovery and they are traumatized and trying to understand what happened or could happen still,” said Mersereau.

Community Events for Addiction Awareness

So far, the Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach has sponsored several community events, including a Community Narcan Training in September; a Blue Christmas event over the holidays in collaboration with local faith leaders; and an Overdose Awareness and Vigil in August.

Since August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day, the nascent group who met with Sen. O'Connor realized there were those in the community who wanted recognition of lost loved ones and acknowledgement of what was happening in Weymouth and surrounding communities with drug overdoses and deaths. At least thirty-eight families in Weymouth have lost a loved one to a drug overdose. **The planning committee and representatives from the town put together the memorial vigil which took place on August 31 at Bradford Hawes Park in Weymouth. There was a huge turnout with 450 people in attendance.** A slide show included loved ones' photos and names in memoriam. The mayor and Senator O'Connor addressed the audience and faith leaders and other town officials attended as well.

“Grief is a real thing that is in our community and there are resources that are there for it. Grief support has a lot of value,” said Mersereau.

For those suffering from substance addiction in some way, the Weymouth Addiction Awareness & Community Outreach Facebook page should be the first point of contact for anyone who wants to be in touch with the group.

FIRST ANNUAL HOLIDAY MEMORIAL SERVICE BRINGS COMFORT TO THOSE LEFT BEHIND



Dennis Keohane read the names of the those honored at the 2017 Holiday Memorial Service.

The holidays can be a difficult time for those who have lost a loved one, especially during the first holiday season without a beloved parent, child, friend, sibling or other close family member. To help our families remember their loved ones in a safe, supportive setting, Keohane Funeral Home hosted the first annual holiday memorial service on November 30 in partnership with the Weymouth Department of Elder Services.

Nearly seventy-five friends and family came together to celebrate the lives of their loved ones at the Whipple Senior Center in Weymouth. The memorial service was officiated by Funeral Celebrant Mary Gallagher, who specializes in helping those left behind find ways to create personalized tributes to remember loved ones.

“Those who attended really benefited from the holiday memorial service,” said Joe Reardon. “Many commented how meaningful it was at such a difficult time.”

The memorial service included lovely music and a moving ceremony. During the candle lighting ceremony, participants lit a candle in memory of a loved one. Each person left the service with a memorial ornament.

To continue this holiday tradition on an annual basis, plans are already under way for this year's service.



The Youth ServiceCorps of the Quincy Asian Resources, Inc.

Quincy Asian Resources Serves and Empowers the Asian Community of the South Shore

Continued from page 1

They also provide enrichment classes through a partnership with the YMCA, such as Chinese painting and basic Mandarin.

"The mission of the organization is to empower individuals, especially new immigrants, that live with barriers in language and culture. We provide outreach, information, and referral services, which we call family and community services," said Philip Chong, CEO of Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. "Many new immigrants who move to Quincy come to us by word-of-mouth."

QARI, a non-profit organization, provides multiple multilingual services including **youth development, adult education programs**, and cultural events, such as the Lunar New

QARI, a non-profit organization, provides multiple multilingual services including youth development, adult education programs, and cultural events, such as the Lunar New Year festival, as well as information and referrals to public and other community organizations.

Year festival, as well as information and referrals to public and other community organizations. The goal is to make connections both within the Asian community and with the larger community; support immigrants and help them to become self-sufficient; and improve lives of Asian Americans on the South Shore to benefit Quincy and its neighboring communities.

"Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. is Quincy's first and largest non-profit agency serving the Asian community," said Joe Reardon, Vice President for

Community Development and Advance Planning at Keohane. **"Having served on the QARI board from 2004 to 2013, I have an enduring connection to QARI and am so pleased to see it flourish in service to our community."**

QARI has four sites located throughout Quincy to serve the Asian population which is the highest per capita in the state. The main location in **Quincy Center at 1509 Hancock Street** has become so well known within the Asian community that the agency is referred

Continued on page 5

Quincy Asian Resources Serves and Empowers the Asian Community of the South Shore

Continued from page 4

to simply as “fifteen-oh-nine” because of the address. “We are so well known in the community, , especially for the Asian and new immigrants, they will tell friends: ‘Just go to fifteen-oh-nine, they will help you,’” said Chong.

There is also an office in **N. Quincy**, another area with a high-density Asian population, and two satellite sites located in the **Quincy YMCA and the Germantown YMCA**. With a large elderly population near the Germantown location, that site allows seniors to access the site more easily than taking a bus across town to Quincy Center.

Because of demographics in the Asian community shifting from new immigrants to more and more well-educated and self-sufficient individuals and families, the strategic partnership with the South Shore YMCA has allowed QARI to provide the type of enrichment experiences the community wanted for themselves and their children, such as **Chinese painting classes**. QARI will soon be launching **Mandarin languages classes** for both children and adults. They are also launching **badminton and ping pong leagues** at the YMCA. Starting the third week February, every Sunday night at 6 pm, the gymnasium will turn into a badminton court. “We are very excited because there is a high demand from people wanting to play badminton and ping pong in this area,” said Chong. The program allows QARI to reach a large Indian and Pakistani population in the area who are highly interested in the leagues.

Community Programs and Events

QARI builds future leaders through their **youth development programs**; empowers adult immigrants through

adult education; and connects the community through **outreach and cultural programs and events**.

QARI Youth Programs provide youth development for middle and high school students through a peer leadership model. “We have very strong youth development and mentoring programs,” said Chong. QARI partners with the Quincy Public Schools for two major programs, including U&I Mentoring and Youth ServiceCorps.

Because of demographics in the Asian community shifting from new immigrants to more and more well-educated and self-sufficient individuals and families, the strategic partnership with the South Shore YMCA has allowed QARI to provide the type of enrichment experiences the community wanted for themselves and their children...

U&I Mentoring meets two times a week for high school students to provide academic, cultural and transition support for many of the new immigrant students in the middle schools. “Many of our high school students are bilingual, so they truly can provide their own experience and help to mentor these middle school students,” said Chong.

Youth ServiceCorps, or YSC, is a year-long, self-run program by Quincy high school students from the Asian community. They identify and charter their own initiatives and projects each year, including their own fundraising. YSC students also do volunteer work at the three major events sponsored by QARI, including **Lunar New Year; a spring community banquet; and the August Moon Festival**.

Ten thousand people are expected to celebrate the Lunar New Year festival at North Quincy High School. The community banquet in May, held at the China Pearl restaurant in Quincy, draws approximately eight hundred people to celebrate food, culture, community successes and provide networking.

But the largest event by far is the August Moon Festival, a street festival held on Coddington Street in Quincy Center. Last year’s event brought in 20,000 people to enjoy food vendors, children’s activities, performances and Asian culture. “It’s a big party!” exclaimed Chong.

QARI utilizes 300 to 400 student volunteers for their large events each year, but they are always in need of additional volunteers. “We mobilize a lot of volunteers to support these big events,” said Chong. **If you are interested in volunteering or would like to make a donation to support the free services QARI provides, please email info@quincyasianresources.org.**

“We’re a great team and we’re growing on the South Shore. We’re very happy to be working with lots of great partners, sponsors, corporations, and cities. We feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to serve the community,” said Chong.

Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce Promotes the Peninsula as a Year-round Destination

Continued from page 1

continually trying to find ways to bring people down to the beach and enjoy, not just the natural resources, but the restaurants and shops and other amenities we have here," said Abbate. "Not just in the summer, but throughout the year."

Chamber Events Throughout the Year

The Chamber conducts their annual **Endless Summer** event every September which has grown to be the town's signature event. "We want folks to know that we don't roll up the sidewalks on Labor Day," said Abbate.

Held on a Saturday in mid-September, Endless Summer a day-long street festival. The town shuts down Nantasket Avenue, which is lined with various vendors from food to hand-made crafts. Live music plays throughout the day, staged next to the historic carousel. Family friendly games, selling items and contests, such as a pizza eating contest, keep the event lively.

"Many of the vendors along the strip also have specials," said Abbate. "The town

comes out with their fire trucks, and coast guard boats and police cruisers, so the kids can actually see these vehicles up close and get a chance to talk to the first responders."

The Endless Summer event also includes bounce houses, street performers and a roaming railroad for kids. "There's something going on all day long. It's a great event. Over the past few years, we've been bringing in upwards of 8,000 people on that avenue," said Abbate. "There's plenty of free parking and it's usually a beautiful, sparkling day. People from out of town can see the kinds of businesses we have in town and the creative community we have here — the restaurants, the shopping, and the natural resources."

In the spring, the HNCC holds a town-wide yard sale over a weekend called **Stem to Stern**. The popular event brings hundreds of people into the heart of the town, not just to the beach area.

The **Hull Holiday Showcase** is held at the Nantasket Beach Resort the weekend after Thanksgiving. Vendors, craftspeople and other small businesses show off their wares and offer specials for the holiday season. Santa even makes an appearance. "It's fun, no-stress shopping on the beach," said Abbate.

The Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce awards up to **two \$1,000 scholarships**

to two graduating Hull seniors who are going on to college. They also sponsor **Candidates Night**, a great opportunity for voters to meet candidates running for public office right before the election.

"We financially support many projects and organizations around town including the **car show** in June; **the fireworks** and **the carnival** that comes to town; the **Chowder Fest**; and other events throughout the year," said Abbate. The HNCC also supports the **Paragon Carousel** [www.paragoncarousel.com], the last remaining attraction from the Paragon Park amusement park on Nantasket Beach, which was active from 1905 to 1984. It's a hand-carved wooden merry-go-round, one of the last of its kind still operating in the country.

The Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce has a small, volunteer board of directors and often partners with other local organizations such as the Rotary Club. Due to the town's rich maritime and life-saving history, Hull was recently designated as a **Coast Guard City** — a rare honor as few towns throughout the country meet the criteria. The HNCC helped purchase the signage around town that displayed that honor.

Whatever the time of year, Hull and Nantasket Beach provide a fun destination for shopping, eating and natural beauty.



Endless Summer is a fun, waterfront street festival on Nantasket Beach in mid-September.

OUR TEAM

Joseph Reardon



Joe Reardon, Vice President for Community Development and Advance Planning

Joe Reardon is the Vice President for Community Development and Advance Planning. He has worked in the funeral industry for many years and has been with Keohane since 2008. Joe works with families and individuals interested in advance funeral planning either for themselves or for a loved one. He strongly believes that funeral preplanning offers many benefits for the family, and allows them, with the help of their funeral director, to focus on designing a personal and meaningful tribute at the time of need rather than spending their time tending to the many other stressful tasks that must be done when a death has occurred.

"Advance planning is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your family," said Joe. "It will provide you with the satisfaction of knowing that your affairs are in order and your family with the peace of mind that comes with knowing they can focus on creating a meaningful ceremony not on administrative tasks or financial decisions."

Joe has seen the area of preplanning grow in recent years. "More and more people are realizing the benefits of funeral planning done ahead of the time of need. Besides saving time and

money, preplanning saves families a lot of stress."

Having been a funeral director for many years, Joe is seeing more and more people now choosing advance planning for themselves because they have gone through the death of their own parents who did not plan ahead. They want to protect their families from the stress and financial burden they endured.

Joe developed his interest in funeral service from his father who felt that funeral directors were in a unique position to make a significant impact in people's lives. Because his father was never able to pursue a career in funeral service, Joe feels fortunate to have been able to establish a career as a funeral director particularly now as part of the Keohane team.

"I've worked with many funeral directors over the years and the team at Keohane is as committed and progressive as any that I've ever worked with," said Joe. "You will not find a staff more empathetic to a family's needs. Our team is highly compassionate and creative in their approach to caring for the families we serve."

"The funeral is for those left behind," said Joe. "Our goal is to find the best ways to help the family cope with the loss and to help with the transition."

Joe credits his family and his Jesuit education for his commitment to being of service to the community, which he believes is another facet of the role of a funeral director. Through his years of service in leadership roles at organizations like Milton Cemetery, Manet Community Health Center, Quincy Asian Resources, Inc., the Norfolk County Advisory Board, St. Agatha Parish Council, Florian C.A.R.E.S, a

nonprofit arm of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, and the Quincy Lions Club, Joe has felt great personal satisfaction in giving back to the community but also feels that his commitment is consistent with the culture at Keohane.

"Ed Keohane is a legend in Quincy and the South Shore, and I want to continue what he started by giving back to the community," said Joe. "In addition to volunteering, we also support local non-profit organizations, schools, and youth sports teams in various ways." Set by Ed's example, Joe sees the Keohane team as part of the fabric of the community they serve.

Joe and his wife, Jeannine, have two children. Eighteen year-old Maggie is a high school senior at Fontbonne Academy and twelve year-old Jack is in sixth grade at St. Agatha School. Outside of work, it's all family all the time for Joe who enjoys spending time coaching his kids' sports teams and attending their other activities.

When someone inquires about preplanning, Joe works with them to determine how the program best suits their needs. He walks them through the entire process and gathers critical information needed when a death occurs. **Every situation is unique, and Joe takes the time to determine what will benefit both the individual and their family.** "The funeral is for those left behind," said Joe. "Our goal is to find the best ways to help the family cope with the loss and to help with the transition."

Joe learned first-hand the value of advance planning. In 1993, his father and his father-in-law died in the same week, leaving many decisions for the families left unattended. Joe and his wife decided to do things differently for his mother-in-law. When she died in 2014, the experience was quite different.

"With advance planning in place, the focus shifted from making difficult decisions to creating a ceremony that allowed us to get the most of what is one of the few unduplicated experiences in life. Families lose out on that opportunity when there are so many other things to do," said Joe.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

What is the Role of a Funeral Assistant?

Funeral assistants perform a variety of duties to support funeral directors and help ceremonies run smoothly for our families. Funeral assistants may transfer flowers; help to park cars during funeral services; drive a limousine or hearse; transfer the deceased from the place of death to the funeral home; or even act as pallbearers if needed.

"Funeral assistants are vital members of the Keohane team," said Joe Reardon, Vice President for Community Development and Advance Planning. "We would not be able to support our families in such a caring and compassionate way without them."

Do Funeral Assistants Need a Professional License?

Not usually. The only funeral assistants licensed by the state are those who assist in transferring people from the place of death to our care at the funeral home. Other than that, the single most important requirement for employment as a funeral assistant is a genuine desire to be of service to others.

"Caring funeral assistants make sure families are comfortable," said Joe.

How Does One Become a Funeral Assistant?

Many of our assistants have joined our team as a post-retirement second career while some are still engaged in primary careers like firefighting where their work schedules fit with the funeral home schedule. Sometimes, funeral assistants are even retired funeral directors.

Several of our assistants have been with us for many years and are well-known in the community. Greg Byron began working as a funeral assistant in Weymouth twenty years ago and is well known by many of our families. The same is true for Tom McManus, who raised his own family and worked as a letter carrier in Quincy. He has been with us for fifteen years and knows many of the families we serve from his mail routes.



(L-R) Mike Sullivan, Al Mitchem, George Jackson and Ed Miller, valued funeral assistants at Keohane Funeral Home.

Facilities Manager Peter Moreschi is a native of Quincy who grew up on the same block as the Keohane family. After he retired from thirty years at Verizon, he still wanted to be of service to his community. He contacted Keohane and asked what he could do to help at the funeral home. Peter now takes care of the grounds, tends the gardens and lawn, delivers flowers to the cemetery and assists the funeral directors as needed.

"I enjoy being helpful to the families we serve by keeping the environment clean and friendly," said Peter. "I make sure they are taken care of by making the facilities presentable and comforting."

"We're always looking for good people who want to help others," said Joe.

If you are interested in becoming a funeral assistant at Keohane Funeral Home, please call our main number at (617) 773-3551. Ask to speak to John Keohane, Co-President; Dennis Keohane, Co-President or Joe Reardon, Vice President for Community Development and Advance Planning.