

News You Can Use

Your monthly resource for news and information about behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disabilities in western North Carolina and beyond

WNC residents to rally for recovery Sept. 10

Western North Carolinians from all walks of life will rally on Sept. 10 in Haywood County to spread the message that people can and do recover from addiction, mental illness and other life challenges.

The 2nd Annual Western Regional Recovery Rally is a community celebration that encourages people to speak openly about recovery and fight the stigma that can prevent others from seeking help. Part of National Recovery Month, the event is free and open to everyone, including individuals who are in recovery, interested in recovery, know someone in recovery or simply want to support our families, friends and neighbors as we work together to build healthier communities.

The rally is family-friendly and takes place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Nancy Weldon Open-Air Gym at Lake Junaluska. Activities include an optional recovery walk around the lake, free food and drinks, inspiring speakers, children's activities and awards for local recovery champions and allies. Nonprofits, healthcare organizations and advocacy groups will share information about local resources.

"We're spreading the word that people do recover, and it's not the exception. In fact, it's the expectation" said Richie Tannerhill, a rally organizer in recovery and a peer trainer at Smoky Mountain MCO, a regional managed healthcare organization. "We're countering the stigma surrounding treatment and recovery, which can cause people to feel ashamed or lose hope, with messages of support and encouragement. We're saving lives right here in our mountain counties and building healthier communities."

The event is sponsored by a partnership among the group Communities Rallying for Recovery, individuals in recovery and their family members, healthcare organizations, nonprofits, local government agencies and recovery allies in law enforcement.

"Law enforcement has been at the front lines of the drug problem and has witnessed its devastating effects," said Waynesville Police Chief Bill Hollingsed. "Enforcing drug laws is an integral part of police work, but we also realize we cannot solely arrest our way out of this problem. Treatment and recovery are the real solutions to this issue."

People in recovery and recovery allies scheduled to speak include Hollingsed and other local officials, state Sen. Jim Davis of Franklin, Asheville visual artist Douglas Lail and Jeff Fink, founder of Go Fetch Wellness, an animal-assisted therapy business.

Addiction and mental health issues can affect people from all walks of life, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, gender, education level or other factors. Nationwide, more than 8 percent of people age 12 or older were addicted to or dependent on alcohol or drugs in the past year. Additionally, 18 percent of U.S. adults experienced mental illness in the past year. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/WesternRegionalRecoveryRally or contact Richie Tannerhill at 1-800-893-6246, ext. 1157, or at richie.tannerhill@smokymountaincenter.com. For more information on National Recovery Month, visit www.recoverymonth.gov.