



FORSYTH COUNTY
DRUG AWARENESS COUNCIL

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EMPOWER.

Strategizer

Leading the way to a
healthier Forsyth County



FORSYTH COUNTY
DRUG AWARENESS COUNCIL

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SCAN ME

August 2024 Volume 4 Issue 4

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Welcome Back Forsyth!

Back to School



Kayden's Korner



We all have a story. Research shows what we have discovered ourselves. The recovery stories of everyday people have a significant impact on the hearers- the youth we are trying to reach and encourage to avoid trying alcohol, vapes, or other

drugs, those who may be dabbling in drug misuse, or those who are already caught in addiction.

Our Council's speaker this month, **Dan Francis**, has a story and presents how positive messaging can inspire life-giving and life-fulfilling choices among those we want to reach and how to approach prevention through it.

You can check out **Natural High**, another resource in our **FYI** section. Its prevention strategy involves seeking your high by doing what makes you most fulfilled and excited.

As we begin a new academic year, let's be creative and be real when telling our stories so that we connect with those listening who may be positively influenced.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



Our next FCDAC Council Meeting is on

Wednesday, September 4
8 a.m.
United Way Offices

Council Meeting Highlights

Director Rachel Kayden opened the 8 a.m. monthly council meeting by welcoming everyone, introducing attendees, and making announcements.

Announcements:

- Rachel let everyone know that **Narcan** is always available at the Council Meeting for members to distribute in the Community.

Our speaker this month is **Dan Francis**, a trailblazing CEO of ORBIIT Recovery and a former EMT/Firefighter with a rich background in healthcare management. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to lead Equity Health and My Private Doctor, expanding access to healthcare services. At ORBIIT Recovery, Dan is revolutionizing addiction treatment with AI, exemplified by the innovative ORBIIT recovery partner watch. As Chairman of HopeLinc, he connects those battling addiction with professional care. A recognized Fox News Midnight Hero and founder of D911 for disaster response, Dan's leadership spans crises and recovery. Dan Francis is an engaging and dynamic speaker who offers stimulating and insightful presentations that will shift your perspective on addiction and recovery.

Dan's talk was entitled "**Positive Prevention- How to Think, Not What to Think.**" **Prevention Messaging.**" "Today," he said, "I want to **shift our focus from confrontation to inspiration** in the battle against drug and alcohol use."

- Dan began by showing examples of news articles and quotes from anti-drug talks to youth, seemingly meant to inform and give anti-drug messaging, but instead using words and statements that actually promote and tell where to find the very products the message was trying to prevent.
- What is **Positive Prevention**? It's a drug prevention strategy rooted in positive psychology rather than fear-based tactics. Positive prevention shifts the attention using questions to encourage self-reflection and critical thinking. Asking the following questions and questions like them can help a young person be self-reflective.

What are the potential outcomes of this decision? (future)

How does this decision align with my values and goals? (dignity)

Who will be affected by my decision, and how? (relationships)

Am I willing to accept responsibility for the outcomes of this decision? (accountability)

- If your child or student won't answer one of the self-reflective questions, **resist telling them what to think**. Instead, **make a statement based on love**. The most important statements are: "I love you." "You matter." "You are important to me." "I care about you." "I want to see you succeed and do well."
- By showing how much you care, the person who is struggling with or learning to make decisions (using or not using drugs or just trying to make good choices) will be more willing to listen to what you have to say.
- Dan made his handouts and website available to the Council.

[Click Here to Listen to the Meeting.](#)

Community Outreach, Youth, Members, and Partners

Parent Partners Corner

by Ashley Dickerson and Marti Roveda

2024-25 School Year, Let's Begin!



It's been a quiet summer for the **Parent Support Committee**. We are eager to re-engage with schools, parents, and community organizations to share resources for prevention, our experience, and our hope for recovery for children and their parents.

The **Parent Support Committee** accepts invitations to just about any opportunity available. We do this on the premise that if we help just **ONE** family



Ashley Dickerson

Ashley currently holds the role of Revenue Accounting Director at AT&T and is an active member of FCDAC. Her personal journey as a parent of a child who suffers from Substance Use Disorder covers a lot of pain, frustration, and isolation; but also a lot of hope and healing. Ashley openly shares her story of personal recovery with other parents to reduce the shame and stigma of the disease and help

start the dialog among parents who may be struggling to find support for themselves. She contributes her

On the promise that we help just one family find recovery, we have done our job.

Well, we exceeded our goal for the 2023-24 school year. Two families reached out to the committee. With loving compassion, we helped guide these families and their children to a local recovery program. As of this newsletter, both families and their children are on the path to recovery and healing.

We hope to double our quota in the 2024-25 school year, but we CANNOT do it alone. We would like everyone reading this newsletter to reach out to us at parents4fcdac@gmail.com with any opportunities to present our prevention and recovery resources. Here's to a great school year and sharing the miracle of recovery or preventing first use.

For members who contribute their insights monthly to the *Strategizer*."

Marti Roveda



Marti is a Strategic Sourcing Manager for Axia Women's Health, an active member of FCDAC, and a volunteer parent advisor for an under-18 recovery program in Nashville. Having a child who started their recovery journey before turning 18, she is passionate about sharing her strength, hope, and experience to educate and eliminate the stigma with parents of youth with Substance Use Disorder. She partners with Ashley to contribute monthly insights to the *Strategizer*.

Youth

Youth Council



Sharmada Venkataramani 2024-2025 Youth Sector Leader

Sharmada Venkataramani is a junior at South Forsyth High School. She is FCDAC's 2024-25 Youth Sector Leader! Sharmada has an avid interest in drug policy and has published a Georgia State Social Studies Fair award-winning research paper on the pharmaceuticals and the opioid epidemic. With a strong passion for drug awareness and prevention, Sharmada is implementing a county-wide THC social media campaign. Her "Elevate Awareness" podcast debuted during the 2023-

24 school year. She hopes to educate her peers and combat drug usage among youth. She is shaping a drug-free future by serving on the FCDAC Youth Council.

"I am very excited to be taking on the position of Youth Sector Lead for the upcoming school year," Sharmada told the *Strategizer*. "As lead for the Youth Sector, my priority is to pull the youth sector together. We come from several schools in the county, but we are all committed to FCDAC's ideals of educating and empowering our peers to choose healthy lifestyles. I am working with Rachel on a large-scale Narcan distribution project to serve marginalized and vulnerable populations in the county. I want to involve FCDAC Youth Council members who would be valuable in organizing these events," she said. "In addition to that project, I am working with council members and school drug counselors Gabby Breiten and Emily Ennis to train school counselors on effective drug intervention strategies for students. Again, as Youth Sector Leader, I plan to involve other youth

sector members to help at these events," she said.

"This summer, I worked with two organizations that collaborate: Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy (GRMP) and Let's be Clear Georgia." said Sharmada.

GRMP is a non-profit corporation of individuals and organizations that utilizes science and credible research to oppose the expansion of laws and policies in Georgia regarding the use of cannabis in various non-standardized, untested, and undosed forms for medical and recreational purposes. Their mission is to promote advocacy and other collaborative efforts using best policies and practices to prevent the expansion of the legalization of cannabis for medical use, which lacks the approval of established medical associations, as well as to prevent recreational legalization in Georgia. "I assisted GRMP's legislative advocacy efforts by helping to create policy briefs that will be given to and inform various stakeholders and elected officials about the serious threats marijuana legalization poses. We focused specifically on closing the Delta 8 THC loophole created by the 2018 Farm Bill," said Sharmada. "GRMP has asked me to become their first youth board member, and I hope to involve other FCDA youth in advocacy, too!" she said.

"**Let's Be Clear Georgia** focuses on community engagement in marijuana prevention. Many counties have funded youth in action teams. I am working with Let's Be Clear to start the first marijuana youth in-action committee. The council will have around 14 members, and two members will represent youth in each of the 6 GA Department of Behavioral Health Department regions. I will be the youth chair of this council, and we will start applications in mid-August. I am super excited to start this endeavor," she said.

"Finally, I hope to resume the "**Elevate Awareness**" podcast after the school year starts, and I am lining up some guests to interview," Sharmada said.

School News



Gabby Breiten, Gateway and Forsyth Academy Drug Counselor



Prevention Coach, North Forsyth High School.

by Gabby Breiten

I'm super excited to start the school year!

As Emily and I kick off the new school year, our top priority is to start by building strong small groups and setting them up for success. We will do this by utilizing the students who have attained sobriety for some time to be leaders and encourage the newer kids on the sobriety journey. We aim to have more new students starting to meet with a substance prevention coach than last year.

One measurable goal of mine is to hold one sober social event per month and two parent meetings per semester. This will include collaborating with the FCDAC Parent Committee, Marti Roveda, and Ashley Dickerson. They are successful parent speakers and always enhance my presentations!

Emily and I will present in health classes at middle and high schools, which are scheduled when the particular school invites us. Right now, we have presentations scheduled at North Forsyth. I look forward to speaking at schools and am available as needed per the school's request. I hope to speak with and collaborate with school personnel as much as possible to be able to reach the students who can benefit the most. The more awareness we have, the better!

Members teaching Members

Self-Reflection and Positivity: Two Essentials in Positive

Prevention Strategy

By Dana Bryan

Our speaker for the August Forsyth County Drug Awareness Council meeting was Dan Francis, and his message was both informative and thought-provoking. Mr. Francis is presently CEO of ORBIT Recovery Inc. and is Chairman of Hopelinc.org, an organization that connects people battling addiction with the appropriate professional care. The majority of his experience is with crisis and recovery through his past work as an EMT and Firefighter (often dealing with emergencies related to complications from drugs and/or alcohol overdose), and now his work with prevention and treatment for those suffering from addiction and/or alcoholism.

Mr. Francis emphasized that the past ten years have shown an increase in drug use among young people between the ages of 15 and 30. His approach to drug prevention and awareness is not by using scare tactics. He refers to his approach as **POSITIVE PREVENTION**, which is based on positive psychology and has the goal of empowering individuals to make healthy choices that correspond with their own personal goals and values. His program encourages young adults to set goals (both short-term and long-term) and to be aware of how their decisions will affect the goals they hope to achieve.

Understanding the relationship between our actions and the consequences of our actions is an approach and a skill that will decrease impulsive decisions, which are the ones we often regret and complicate our lives. Drug use is a common choice that is made impulsively without considering how it will affect our future or our ability to achieve our goals.

Mr. Francis presents four basic questions to guide young adults through their decision-making. These questions foster self-reflection, which is a learned skill. Reflecting frequently is important and often lost in the busy world in which there are so many distractions. Reflecting on our hopes and dreams for our future, knowing what values and principles are essential to uphold our dignity, recognizing the impact of our actions on others, and owning the consequences of our actions have to be practiced.

The four questions are:

1. "What are the potential outcomes of this decision?"
2. "How does this decision align with my values and goals?"
3. "Who will be affected by my decision and how?"
4. "Am I willing to accept the responsibility for the outcomes of this decision?"

Mr. Francis hopes to help young adults realize that "bad decisions can have lasting effects." Those who use the above four questions to filter their choices are more likely to make decisions that will affect their future in a positive way and are less likely to make those decisions that they will regret for the rest of their lives, such as using drugs.

What might this conversation look like? Mr. Francis provided a short scenario; if your question is, "Do you think smoking marijuana will help you get into the University of GA?" Pause and wait. If the response is "I don't know." "Whatever," or any negative response, resist telling them what to think; chances are, they know the correct response. Make your statement based on LOVE. Say something like, "I would be so proud to see you graduate and go to UGA! It is a great school, and I can see you doing very well there." Fill them with positive thoughts about their future!



Dana Bryan

Dana is a retired middle school teacher and member of FCDAC.

Through her personal loss of her daughter to drug experimentation, Dana devotes her time reaching out to youth through presentations about the real consequences and high risk of experimenting with addictive substances and how it affects them, their futures, and their families. She contributes her insights monthly to the *Strategizer*. Thanks, Dana!

doing very well there. Fill them with positive thoughts about their future:

According to Mr. Francis, "The most important words are "I love you, You matter, You are important to me, I care about you. I want to see you succeed and do well." I would add, "I am for you, not against you." "I believe in you, even when it is hard for you to see your goodness or believe in yourself."

We live in a negative, discouraging, fearful world. Please encourage your children to make the choices that are best for them. In most cases, we know what is best for us. It is not always easy to choose what is best for us, but if we do, we will never regret that choice or its positive outcome.

Our Partners in Prevention

Fundraisers for Forsyth County Community Connections



Enjoy an evening of BBQ, live music and community coming together to strengthen children and families of Forsyth County!

When: **Saturday, August 24th, 6 p.m.**

Where: **Kinsey Family Farm**
7170 Jot-Em Down Road
Gainesville, GA 30506

All proceeds benefit **Forsyth County Community Connection**, which supports and assists children and families in Forsyth County.
Live Music Cornhole, Axe Throwing, Hot Air Balloon Rides and More!

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)

DROP'N BAGS CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

\$100 PER TEAM

PRIZES FOR:
TOP 4 TEAMS,
WINNING TEAM,
MOST CREATIVE
NAME AND
MOST MONEY
RAISED!!

\$500 SPONSOR
2 TICKETS TO BLUES & Q

**PRESENTED BY
APRICOT LANE &
WHEEZY'S
VICKERY VILLAGE**

**AUGUST
17TH [AT] 4PM**

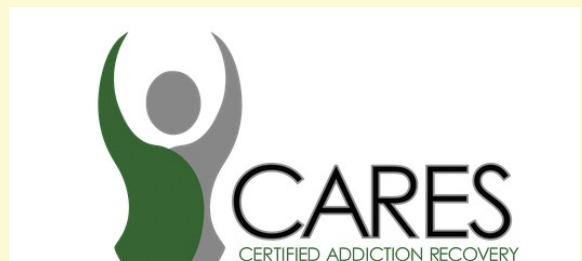
To register:

Proceeds go to the new DROP resource center for homeless youth

FORSYTH COUNTY
COMMUNITY CONNECTION
family connection

6th Annual Recovery

Month Lunch



Wednesday, September 11, 2024
 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Buckhead Club
 3344 Peachtree Road, Suite 2600, Atlanta

The 2024 National Recovery Month theme, "Recovery is for Everyone: Every Person, Every Family, Every Community"

Highlights include:

- #The Georgia Recovers Bus Tour
- Georgia Council Recovery Initiatives
 - Georgia Recovery Community Organizations
- Georgia Council for Recovery Awards Presentation

[Click Here to Purchase a Ticket](#)

Apply Now For The CARES Academy 66!

Applications will close on
Friday, August 23rd, 2024 4 PM

Group Interviews will take place on
Tuesday, September 17th, 2024.

Academy Dates October 21st - 25th, 2024

[Click Here for your ticket](#)



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
 COMMERCIAL SEXUAL
 EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN
 AWARENESS**



LEARN ABOUT:

- Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Community resources available to victims
- Trauma, abuse, and victimization of children
- Warning signs that trafficking victims may display

Thursday, September 5, 2024

10 am to 12 pm

Virtually Via Zoom

Registration is required you will be emailed the Zoom link the week of the training



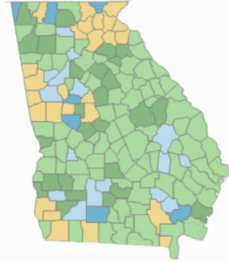
Continuing Education Credits are available.

REGISTER HERE:

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Questions email Krista Gonc

KristaG@gacfa.org



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/GeorgiaCenterforChildAdvocacy



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www.georgiacenterforchildadvocacy.org

NEWS FOR YOU

Local News



Walk for Recovery Donation Received!

Left to right: **Sarah Pedarre**, Executive Director of Forsyth County Community Connection, and FCDAC Director **Rachel Kayden**. Recently, Sarah Pedarre, Executive Director of Community Family Connection, presented a donation check to FCDAC from **community members and Community Family Connections for The Walk for Recovery**. These donations were received from online donations. **Thank you**, Community Family Connection, and all community supporters of FCDAC.

National News

THC Infused Drinks Popular in Minnesota



According to a July 10, 2024 Politico article by Paul Demko, **Minnesota's market for THC drinks has exploded into a nearly \$200 million industry over the last two years.** In 2020, state



\$200 million industry over the last two years! In 2020, state lawmakers partially legalized cannabis into a healthcare policy bill, permitting the sale of low-potency, hemp-derived beverages. Struggling craft breweries, reeling financially from the pandemic, have jumped at creating new product lines infused with pot.

The result has stunned the legal weed industry, with the law leading to an explosion in the market for THC beverages unlike anything seen across the country. Practically every liquor store in Minnesota now devotes shelf space to intoxicating cannabis drinks.

[Read the Article HERE](#)

FYI

The Brain Science Behind Stories' Influence on Us



Natural High is a drug prevention nonprofit that inspires and empowers youth to find their natural high and develop the skills and courage to live life well. We engage influencers, educators, and peer groups to help young people discover those core activities in their lives that uplift, inspire, and motivate them — to find their 'Natural High' rather than use alcohol or drugs.

Studies show that a fact delivered in a story is much more likely to stick than a fact delivered by itself or among a list of facts.

For a kid faced with a choice of whether or not to try drugs, that moment of recall can mean the difference between death and life.

An article titled [The Power of Storytelling and How it Affects Your Brain](#) stated that there are indications of the physiological impacts on the body of listeners to a story- — *"During scenes of high action or tension, the stress hormone cortisol is released into your bloodstream, which leads to greater immersion and responsiveness to the arc of a story... More character-driven stories will affect the release of oxytocin into the blood, a so-called "empathy" hormone that helps people bond."*

The story left lasting impressions on the listeners and created a bond between them and the storyteller. These impressions reside in the part of the brain associated with lived experiences, so the listener feels like they have lived the story.

Natural High uses stories of young people who discovered that choosing an interest, activity, or hobby to pursue allowed them to feel good about themselves, achieve remarkable results, and attain a "natural high." Most of the storytellers came to a crossroads where they could have chosen the path of alcohol or drugs to achieve an unnatural high but recognized the trap. These storytellers can play an important part in our prevention efforts.

[Read the article here.](#)

I Made A Choice



After moving to Indianapolis in 6th grade, Mike Conley encountered kids who tried to get him to try drugs. Using



excuses at first to escape that pressure, he finally said, "I am not into that; it isn't going to help me become who I want to be." "I saw what drugs did to a friend who was even a better athlete than me."

On the Calendar



August

- First Day of School, Thursday August 1
- International Overdose Awareness Day, August 31
- [Forsyth County Community Connection Fundraiser](#), Kinsey Farms, August 24

FORSYTH COUNTY
DRUG AWARENESS COUNCIL

DONATE TODAY!

SCAN ME



September

- Never forget 911, September 11
- **SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH**
- Suicide Awareness Month
- Human Trafficking Virtual Workshop, September 5 (See flyer above)