

Start Healing Now

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Volume 1

Edition 5

Advocacy, Education & Community in October

October was a month of big connections and powerful conversations for Start Healing Now. We kicked things off in St. Paul at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, where our team joined Mobilize Recovery's Campus Surge for the UPLIFT & UPHOLD symposium. As the only law school stop on the tour, the event brought together students, legal professionals, and advocates to talk about how the legal system can better support people who use drugs and those in recovery, and gave us a chance to highlight harm reduction, Overdose Aid Kits (O.A.K.), and recovery-friendly policy.

Mid-month, our team headed to Wisconsin Dells for the annual Mental Health & Substance Use Recovery Conference at the Kalahari Resort, joining providers, peers, and allies from across the state. There, we shared information on naloxone access, Overdose Aid Kits, and recovery resources while also learning from workshops focused on trauma, equity, peer support, and integrated treatment—bringing fresh ideas back to the communities we serve.

We also spent meaningful time strengthening local partnerships. Over breakfast in Altoona, some of our team met with State Senator Jesse James to catch up, celebrate the ongoing installation of Overdose Aid Kits in Wisconsin schools, and talk about what's next in the fight against opioid overdose. And in Milwaukee, President Jessica Geschke represented Start Healing Now at the Marquette Recovery Day Fair, tabling alongside campus and community partners to share naloxone, Overdose Aid Kit information, and recovery support resources with students, staff, and visitors.

Together, these October events expanded our reach – from law students and policymakers to treatment providers, peers, and college students—and moved us closer to our vision of a Wisconsin where every person has a real chance to recover and thrive.



Start Healing Now

Contact Us

Email us at: shndirect@gmail.com

Find SHN on the web at: <https://starthealingnow.org>

Get to Know the Board

Shari Klessig - Parent Ambassador

Shari is the Parent Ambassador & Secretary for Start Healing Now and works part-time for UWO-CCDET.



Shari brings over 30 years of experience in human services and healthcare, with a focus on policy analysis, program implementation, and cross-sector collaboration.

She spent 23 years with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, including a decade as Deputy Administrator of the Division of Quality Assurance. Since retiring in 2021, she has continued her work as a consultant, partnering with the Wisconsin Caregiver Training Project and the UW Oshkosh CCDET team.

She is honored to serve as the parent ambassador on the Start Healing Now (SHN) Board of Directors. She is especially passionate about promoting the installation of Overdose Aid Kits (O.A.K.)—a project that carries deep personal meaning.

In 2017, she lost her only child, Travis (forever 24), to fentanyl poisoning. Through this advocacy, she hopes to prevent other families from facing similar tragedy. Shari remains deeply committed to making a difference, however small, in the fight against substance use disorder.

Why Every High School Should Have Narcan on Hand

High schools should have Narcan on hand because it's one of the simplest, safest, and most effective ways to protect students in today's opioid landscape. Across the country, overdose rates among teens have risen sharply in recent years—often due to counterfeit pills containing fentanyl. Narcan is easy to use, has no risk of misuse, and can quickly reverse an overdose while waiting for emergency responders to arrive. Schools are also natural places for prevention and support, since students spend so much of their time there and school staff are often the first adults nearby if something goes wrong. Communities that make naloxone widely available see better bystander response and fewer preventable deaths, and many states now recommend or require schools to keep it accessible. Having Narcan in high schools is a commonsense step that helps keep students safer, supports wellness, and reinforces that every young life is worth protecting.

SHN Events



October Highlights

Start Healing Now had a busy month on the road and in the community. We joined Mobilize Recovery at Mitchell Hamline School of Law and connected with providers at the WI Mental Health & Substance Use Recovery Conference. We also met with Senator Jesse James to discuss statewide O.A.K. expansion and wrapped up the month at Marquette's Recovery Day Fair.



START HEALING NOW


<https://starthealingnow.org/>

Start Healing Now will be at **The New Drug Talk: Connect to Protect** on Wednesday, November 19, 2025 (6:30–8:00 PM) at Verona Area High School.

We'll have a resource table with information about our Overdose Aid Kit (O.A.K.) Program and support resources for families affected by substance use. This free event features a short film from Song for Charlie, expert speakers, and practical tips for families to help keep kids safe from fake pills and fentanyl.

Verona Area High School PAC
Wednesday, Nov 19 | 6:30–8:00

Together, we can build safer, stronger communities.



FAMILY SAFETY EVENT

Navigating Today's Changing Drug Landscape

Verona Area High School presents
THE NEW DRUG TALK: CONNECT TO PROTECT
A critical conversation for all parents and guardians

DATE:
Wednesday, November 19, 2025

TIME:
6:30-8pm

LOCATION:
Performing Arts Center (PAC) at VAHS
234 Wildcat Way, Verona, WI
Enter Door 10

Join us to learn:

- How today's drug landscape has changed with the emergence of fake prescription pills made with fentanyl
- Practical strategies to start effective conversations with your children
- Protective factors every family should understand
- Resources to help your family navigate these challenges together

Featuring:

- An educational short film from Song for Charlie
- Presentation by experts who understand what families are facing
- Q&A session to address your specific concerns

Learn more about The New Drug Talk at thenewdrugtalk.org

SONG FOR CHARLIE'S
THE NEW DRUG TALK
CONNECT TO PROTECT

WHY ATTEND?

The emergence of fentanyl in fake prescription pills has created unprecedented risks for young people. This isn't just about "drugs"—it's about equipping your family with the knowledge to stay safe in a rapidly changing world. Research shows that 83% of teens are less likely to misuse pills after learning about these dangers.

FREE ADMISSION

Appropriate for caregivers of middle and high school students

QUESTIONS?

Contact: Tamara Sutor
608-653-1272 or Teresa Nicholas or Shawn Harris

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<https://www.facebook.com/overdoseaidkit>

AND INSTAGRAM

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