



# RECOVERY TALKS:

Community Listening Forum  
on Addiction and Recovery

Wednesday, December 15, 2015

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Center for Family Life and Recovery

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Center for Family Life and Recovery (CFLR) and the Prevention Network co-sponsored the seventh *FOR-NY Recovery Talks Community Listening Forum*. Almost forty people attended the event, which was moderated by Judy Reilly, CFLR Services Director.

**“I had six years of sobriety when I was put on narcotics after being injured. That addiction was worse than my addiction to alcohol...I lost everything.”**

- Tony,  
Utica, NY

## **PURPOSE OF FORUM: CELEBRATE THE JOY OF RECOVERY AND IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO RECOVERY**

- ❖ Put a face to people and families in Recovery; a voice to people impacted by addiction; and a space for families and friends who have lost someone to addiction
- ❖ Help individuals and families overcome the stigma that prevents so many from seeking help
- ❖ End discrimination around addiction that create barriers to Recovery
- ❖ Engage and empower Recovery advocates in communities across the state
- ❖ Create an organized advocacy effort to change state policies to expand access to Recovery

## **HIGHLIGHTS – COMMENTS, PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED, OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:**

- We must end stigma, which is more than discriminatory; it's often fatal.
- Families must be represented in treatment and recovery because addiction is a family disease, often resulting in children inheriting learned behavior from their parents.
- Physicians lack addiction training which results in their prescribing pain medication to people in sustained recovery which can lead to relapse.
- Lack of communication between military and civilian agencies have led to over-prescriptions of opiates, with consequences that result in dishonorable discharge and incarceration.
- Upstate beds and medication assisted treatment is often unavailable, which results in cycles of relapse and overdose.
- We must have treatment on demand - hitting rock bottom should not be a prerequisite to getting help.
- We need to humanize the disease of addiction with empowering language and end the crisis of conscience that treats people who are addicted as moral delinquents.

## **FINDINGS: COMMON THEMES**

- There are not enough available beds for people, especially for women, who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs.
- Waiting lists of up to a month are literally killing people with relapse and overdose that often results in death.
- People are in desperate need for proper medical treatment, including detox.
- More forums are needed to bring people in the recovery community together to talk about solutions to the addiction epidemic.
- The children of parents who are addicted are some of our most vulnerable citizens who need help.
- Insurance is one of the biggest barriers to recovery, because managed care is often making critical decisions that should be made by addiction treatment providers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Increase funding and resources** for family navigators and organizations that can address the urgency of the public health crisis of addiction.
- **Increase funding and resources** for drug courts and other alternatives to incarceration.
- **Provide peer recovery supports** for individual and family members can receive evidence based, appropriate services.
- **Increase treatment** options for individuals beyond the 7-10 day provisions that often exist.
- **Recognize family members** as primary clients and provide them with supports specific to addiction and recovery.
- **Regulate physician education** so that it includes addiction and recovery training that is up to date.



On December 15, 2015, Cassandra Sheets, Executive Director at the Center for Family Life and Recovery, welcomed the almost forty attendees from the Utica area to the seventh *FOR-NY Recovery Talks: Community Listening Forum*.

## **EVENT AGENDA:**

6:00 pm	<b>Welcome:</b>	Bob Lindsey, FOR-NY CEO Cassandra Sheets, CFLR CEO
6:05 pm	<b>Moderator:</b>	Judy Reilly, CFLR Services Director
	<b>Panellists:</b>	Captain Tim Bates, Rome Police Department Hon. Randall Caldwell, Oneida County Family Court Sergeant Terry Gilbert, Oneida Sheriff's Office Hon. Christopher Giruzzi, Utica City Court Hon. James R. Griffith, Oneida County Family Court Commissioner Robin O'Brien, Oneida County Dept. of Mental Health

	Mark Swire, BS, Critical Care Unit
6:10 pm	<b>Lead Speaker:</b> Paul Dunn, CFLR Board Member
6:15 pm	<b>Open Mic:</b> Anyone Who Wants to Speak
7:00 pm	<b>Comments:</b> Listening Panel Members
7:25 pm	<b>Wrap-Up:</b> Bob Lindsey, FOR-NY CEO

**PANELISTS:**

- ❖ **Captain Timothy Bates** has been active on the Oneida County Heroin / Opiate Task Force, and has been a featured panelist over the years. He has served as detective commander since 2006, supervising the Detective Division.
- ❖ **Judge Randall Caldwell** is an Oneida County Family Court Judge. He received his B.A. from Utica College of Syracuse University and his J.D. from Ohio Northern University Law School.
- ❖ **Sergeant Terry Gilbert** is a 25- year Veteran of the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office currently assigned to the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office Community Affairs Unit. He is a certified Police Instructor, Corrections Instructor, Firearms Instructor, Defensive Tactics Instructor, O.C. Spray Instructor, and Baton Instructor
- ❖ **Hon. Christopher Giruzzi** is the Utica City Court Judge and has practiced extensively in criminal, civil and traffic law. He was born and raised in the City of Utica and graduated from Utica Free Academy in 1984. He received his B.A. from SUNY Plattsburgh and his J.D. from Syracuse University School of Law.
- ❖ **Hon. James R. Griffith** is the Oneida County Family Court Judge and was elected, 1999 to 2008; and re-elected, 2009 to 2018. He has extensive professional experience in the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee, Investigations Staff, 1976 to 1977; New York State & Federal Courts, Attorney, 1981 to 1998. Admission to the Bar: NYS, Appellate Division, First Department, 1981; J.D., Columbia Law School, 1980; B.A., Princeton University, 1976.
- ❖ **Commissioner Robin O’Brien** has spent her career working with recipients of mental health on many levels. She has also served as Executive Director of U.S. Care Systems in Utica for the past 20 years.
- ❖ **Cassandra Sheets**, LMSW is the CEO for Center for Family Life and Recovery. She was awarded the 2012 Executive of the Year Award, as a non-profit executive, for exhibiting leadership, planning skills, strong staff growth, board development, solid fiscal management and increased fundraising. Her MSW is from Syracuse University.
- ❖ **Mark Swire** is a social worker at the Critical Care Unit. He is a graduate of SUNY Brockport with 20 years of case work experience in the ARC, Oneida County and Faxton St. Luke’s Health Care

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# RECOVERY TALKS:

## Community Listening Forum on Addiction and Recovery

This a series of local forums being held across New York State to provide community members the opportunity to share personal experiences in dealing with alcohol and drug addiction, loss of a family member or friend, as well as recovery from addiction.

The Listening Forums will engage the community in discussion with local leaders and result in a report titled, The State of Addiction Recovery in New York to better inform the public and policy makers.

**Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**6:00 pm - 7:30 pm**

Center for Family Life and Recovery  
Suite 401  
502 Court Street, Utica, NY 13502

**Register at** <https://goo.gl/zG9xhp>

**To Speak** Speaker's remarks will be limited to 3 minutes in order to allow as many people as possible to speak

CO- SPONSORED BY: Center for Family Life and Recovery and the Prevention Network



For more information, contact:  
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