

JANUARY 2025

NEWSLETTER



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November/December Recap

The Cattaraugus Prevention team had the holiday season start off with a bang as the Western NY area was graced with a winter surprise that not only came early, but dropped more snowfall over a 30 day period than it had seen in the past 3 years combined!

The Prevention team persevered through rough driving conditions and snow days to continue providing prevention content within the Lakeshore Middle and High school throughout both months. One such topic included self-care through the holiday and winter season. Mary Mohawk-Jensen of the Prevention Team offered content to students regarding traditional Native practices and medicines that promoted self care and wellness throughout the community, and how said practices have slowly disappeared over time. Students were educated on the importance of these practices, different ways to reengage them, and how they can be useful in helping overcome the stressors and triggers that impact adolescents of today's generation.

While the hustle and bustle of the holiday season garnered a lot of the community's attention, the Prevention Department were still able to bring folks together for a number of events. On November 7th, community members gathered to learn about a few medicine plants used amongst our Haudenosaunee people. Travis Stafford shared knowledge on oyë'gwa'ö:weh and osgwai'da' (tobacco and wild ginger), and when/how they are used. People attending then made their own leather pouch to hold their own medicines in, and tobacco was shared with each person. All supplies were provided by the Cattaraugus Prevention Unit.

On November 11th and 12th, 2024, Kathy Scott came to the Seneca Clubhouse to teach community members how to make Onö:nya' gaya'da' (cornhusk doll). Participants were instructed by Kathy and her sister, Bernadette Scott, on how to create the head and body of the doll. Their mother, Marcy Kane, also attended and taught how to dress and sew traditional outfits for the dolls. Kathy, Bernadette, Marcy, and sister Toni are well known for their dolls and other cornhusk creations, with pieces of their work in many museums locally and around the country. Several of their beautiful dolls were on display during the class for participants to inspect and enjoy.

Tuesday, December 10th, saw the Prevention Department hold what hopes to be an annual event with its Holiday Social. Community members and employees gathered in the Grand Room for food and drinks, as well as door prizes that were given away throughout the evening. Also in attendance were the Newtown Singers who sang and danced with participants throughout the evening!

Special thanks goes out to the Newtown Singers, Kathy and Bernadette Scott and Marcy Kane for their assistance and participation in our November and December events!



Seneca Strong staff member Rachel Schenandoah (far left) with members of the community showing off their Corn Husk dolls made during the event held on November 11th and 12th, 2024

The Medicine Pouch event held on November 7th had community members making their own medicine pouches out of raw materials



Members of the Newtown Singers taking a break from the festivities (top left) while others show off some of the gifts they won as door prizes, as well as the family and friends that they came with to share the wonderful evening on December 10th, 2024!



Gwa:dëh

"To Learn"

This Month's Topic:

SELF CARE

The holiday season can be notorious for the stress it creates on an individual: budgeting and gift purchasing, seeking out the best deals, long lines and crowds at stores, cooking, baking and preparing for loved ones coming to our homes, and especially remembering loved ones who are no longer with us. The holiday season is a time that we spend putting others before ourselves, and getting lost in the chaos of everything that is going on can wear a person down before the season barely begins.

When talking to many people in the community about self care, many will offer tasks they take part in that will help them feel better "in the moment." Some examples include: taking a personal day, lying down for a nap, getting your nails done, getting a hair-cut, a massage, or sometimes just walking away for a breath of fresh air outside.

Self-care does include all of these things. However, many people still struggle with overwhelming emotions; not only during the holiday season, but year round. Anniversaries, birthdays, or special dates have a tendency to bring these feelings to the surface. This is especially the case if these are dates that correspond with those we have lost. These feelings can quickly become overwhelming, and can lead to negative responses, such as an emotional break-down, or the abuse of drugs and alcohol to cope.

So, how will activities such as the ones mentioned prevent these times from becoming overwhelming?

The first aspect of self care that many need to consider is that taking care of ones self needs to be done from a holistic approach. While getting your nails done or getting a massage might make you feel better in the moment, what happens to us when that moment is over? How long before those negative thoughts and feelings return? Self care can only be maintained when a person is able to balance their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, through tasks that address each one individually or as a whole.

It is important for everyone to take a look at self-care and wellness from a broader lens. Wellness is not an individual task, but rather a lifestyle, and the choices we make as part of that lifestyle. Positive routines that we adhere to, supports we surround ourselves with who add to our wellness rather than take from it. Being active daily, eating well, and sleeping well are all just single facets of our self care that contribute to our overall wellness. Each of these things alone will not lead us to a healthy, fulfilling life. It is only through our ability to bring all these tasks together in a balance that fits the lifestyles we want that will allow us to do so.

For more information regarding self-care and holistic wellness, please visit bewell.ny.gov for other topics and suggestions for better self-care.

As well, keep on the lookout for February's event calendar as the Prevention Department will be hosting an interactive Self-Care presentation at the end of the month. Don't miss it!



Please join us in welcoming Mike Thompson to our Prevention Department! Mike is a resident of Jamestown, NY in Chautauqua County and earned his Bachelor's degree in English education from Buffalo State University and his Master's degree in education from SUNY Fredonia. Mike has over 20 years of teaching experience and most recently has been a community educator specializing in prevention

education. In addition, Mike has been a child advocate teaching community lessons in CPR and first aid, fire safety, distracted driving, bike and traffic safety and teen pregnancy prevention. Finally, we are happy to announce that Mike is getting married this month to his fiancé Sally Berg, who is a music teacher at Sherman Central School. Congratulations!

Culture IS Prevention

CULTURAL PRACTICES ARE
PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT
REDUCE THE RISK OF YOUTH
ENGAGING IN SUBSTANCE MISUSE.
LEARNING, PRACTICING AND
KNOWING OUR CULTURE HAS
POSITIVE EFFECTS OF MENTAL
HEALTH, SELF ESTEEM AND
LOWERING THE RISK OF UTILIZING
MIND CHANGERS AND OTHER
HARMFUL SUBSTANCES