



MYSTIC VALLEY
Public Health Coalition

April 2024 Newsletter

The Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition works to build the collective responsibility of creating and sustaining environments where communities can thrive in supportive and healthy spaces.

National Public Health Week

Every April, we celebrate National Public Health Week. Each day highlights a different public health topic. We sought to bring these topics to life in our communities, so we interviewed local individuals with expertise in the topic area.

April 1st - Civic Engagement

Civic engagement encompasses the actions that community members take to identify and address problems. For example, voting allows people to help make decisions about their community, like building new sidewalks to make an area for walkable.

"Our goal is to help make the community a healthy, safe place to live and community members know their community best."

"Civic engagement gives you a voice. It allows you to make an impact in your community. You can make an impact by sharing feedback especially when there are survey and listening sessions happening. These ideas are taken into account as we plan our own programming. We want to meet the needs that your seeing in your community."

-- Emily Hatchouel, Public Health Specialist, Melrose

April 2nd - Healthy Neighborhoods

Where we live, eat, sleep, work, etc. has an impact on our health. It is key to have a healthy environment to be able to be the foundation for other aspects of health and wellbeing such as mental health, social connections, spiritual health, and more.

"A truly healthy neighborhood includes aspects beyond physical health. It promotes social cohesion, economic stability, access to education, safe environments, safe and nutritious food, and recreation opportunities. In essence, a healthy neighborhood creates a sense of belonging for all residents regardless of their socioeconomic status by fostering the well-being and flourishing of everyone."

"Witnessing the positive impact of our efforts on individuals and communities drives me to continue advocating for health equity and social justice. I am motivated by the resilience and strength of the people I serve and represent, as well as by the collective commitment of our team to creating a healthier and more equitable community for everyone."

-- Sophie Jean-Felix, Health Equity Coordinator, Medford

April 3rd - Climate Change

Climate change refers to the long-term change in climate patterns regarding increasing temperature and precipitation. This directly impacts our environment and subsequently, health.

"As a public health student at Syracuse, we have talked a lot about how the effects of climate change impact disease, water availability, food availability, and the intensity and frequency of natural disasters."

"There are small ways that people can help slow the effects of climate change such as recycling, trying to use less disposable plastic, switch to fluorescent lightbulbs, plant gardens/help create green spaces, and many more."

-- Megan Rienzo, Syracuse University student

April 4th - New Tools and Innovation

As the public health field grows, new technology is consistently being created to help address the needs of the community. In our communities, the MVPHC has distributed PocketTalks - a handheld translator that allows conversations to be translated in real time.

"I've used the PocketTalks and I feel like they are very easy! I've used them while I've been on calls and traffic stops. The PocketTalks helped so much with the interaction."

-- Lorrin Taliaferro, Reading Police Department

April 5th - Reproductive and Sexual Health

Access to quality reproductive and sexual health care and education can help people live healthier and happier lives.

"Public health involves preventing disease and protecting and improving health for individuals and communities. Sexual and reproductive health is a critical part of public health. It focuses on prevention of STIs, sexual violence and discrimination, unintended pregnancies, and more. It also focuses on the promotion of sexual health and reproductive rights."

"Destigmatizing sexual and reproductive health is a public health priority. Take responsibility for your own sexual health by getting screened for STIs, using protection, and having open conversations with sexual partners. Shame and embarrassment surrounding sexual health can prevent people from accessing the care and resources they need to stay healthy."

-- Jill Hertig, Public Health Nurse, Medford

April 6th - Emergency Preparedness

Emergency events are unexpected, but it can help to be prepared. Having supplies and a plan for events such as natural disasters can help protect you and your families.

"Melrose Emergency Management, using the guidelines of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), facilitates planning, secures, and provides resources to help protect the residents and the business community from hazards that threaten Melrose and provides assistance. This is done through the four phases of Emergency Management: Preparedness (Planning, Training, exercising), Response,

Mitigation and Recovery. Working in close partnership with city departments and our Regional/State Partners, EM plans and prepares for emergencies, educates the public about emergency preparedness, conducts training exercises, and performs other services to support the City's overall preparedness. EM follows an all-hazards approach, preparing for various types of emergencies – natural or man-made."

"Any member of the community, resident, or business can call or email. Emergency Management can be located on the city's web page. I am more than willing to speak with anyone about emergency management and what we do day to day."

-- Allan Alpert, Director Melrose Emergency Department

April 7th - The Future of Public Health

The future of public health is reliant on community voices and partnering with different sectors to be able to support a community's needs. One way is by getting youth involved in public health and helping the next generation take over, focusing on highlighting equity and inclusivity.

"I mean a big one is, you know, being involved with these groups at the schools that the whole goal is to not only better health, but to get people more aware."

-- Henry, Reading Rocket Leaders in Action member

"I think it's going to be important to continue to educate the next generation as public health will begin to be in their hands. I believe that education is at the basis of everything involving public health."

-- Trevor V., Youth Action Team member

MVPHC Public Health Youth Leadership Group

Each month, a member of the Public Health Youth Leadership Group creates a written piece on a specific topic.

Read below for Diamond's piece on Autism Acceptance Month!

Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month

By Diamond

What is autism?

Autism is a spectrum disorder characterized by developmental differences in social interaction, communication, and behavior. Risk factors for autism include a combination of genetic and environmental factors, such as family history, advanced parental age, pregnancy complications, and pregnancies less than one year apart. There is no known cause for autism, and it's important to understand that identifying potential risks is not the same as there being a known cause. Medical professionals and psychologists use a child's developmental history, social interaction, communication, and intellectual skills to conduct an evaluation to make an autism diagnosis. Symptoms may include speech delays, nonverbal communication, difficulty with facial expressions, and challenges adjusting to routine changes. Individuals with autism display distinct strengths in learning and memory, problem-solving skills (such as math), and visual problem-solving abilities.

What is Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month, and how did it get started?

Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month aims to raise awareness about the neurological disorder affecting millions worldwide and promote acceptance of those diagnosed with it, focusing on daily life experiences and support options.

Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month educates the public about autism's prevalence, early diagnosis and intervention, and the need for more research to understand the disorder, aiming to reduce stigma and promote inclusivity for those with autism. In 1970, psychologist and autism researcher Bernard Rimland selected April as the month to commemorate his son's birthday and the beginning of spring, symbolizing new beginnings, thus establishing the month's significance.

Why is Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month important?

Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month fosters inclusivity and connection among individuals with autism and advocates on the subject, enabling them to achieve optimal health and reach their full potential through increased social media and community support. Advocates for individuals with autism will have a better life as they

have a month to share their stories with others and receive feedback. It's important to accommodate people with autism spectrum disorder in community activities and make

sure they're getting the right support. By raising awareness, we can stop the myths and misconceptions about people with autism. Finally, raising awareness can lead to better early detection and intervention, which can make a big difference.

For more resources check out!

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/world-autism-month>

<https://autismsociety.org/autism-acceptance-month/>

Stoneham Events

FREE LEARNING SERIES FOR SENIORS



Empowering Wellness:

Mindful Choices for Health

Stoneham Senior Center
136 Elm St., Stoneham, MA 02180
April 9th, Tuesday
10:30am to Noon

Calling All Seniors!

Don't miss our insightful panel discussion on essential health resources to empower you in making conscious choices for physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Learn how to actively care for yourself and maintain a balanced life. Plus, lunch is on us!



RSVP Required by Friday April 5th

Call the Stoneham Senior Center at (781) 438-1157 to secure your spot!

Featured Speakers:

- Stoneham Board of Health
- Stoneham Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Community
- SAAV
- Eliot Human Services

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events here.



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Wakefield Events

**Approximately 60%
of high-school-aged
adolescents report
having gambled for
money in the last year.**

National Council on Problem Gambling



TALKING TO YOUR TEENS ABOUT GAMBLING

Tips for parents and caregivers

Online gambling and sports betting have become more popular, and gambling among teenagers is on the rise.

In this Zoom session, you will learn about:

- Current gambling trends
- Signs to look for in your teen
- Symptoms of problem gambling
- Strategies to help you talk to your teen about gambling and its risks

**April 25
7 to 8 p.m.**

Virtual via Zoom

Meeting ID:
826 4096 1261



Sponsored by the Wake-Up Coalition, Wakefield Public Schools, the Wakefield Health and Human Services Department, and Riverside Community Care

Wakefield Public Schools
**PARENT
UNIVERSITY**

Reading Events

HOW CAN THE READING COMMUNITY SUPPORT MIDDLE SCHOOLERS?

Join us for parent listening sessions as we discuss best practices to support our middle schoolers so they are empowered to thrive socially and emotionally!

**When: Tuesday, April 30,
9:30am - 10:30am and
6pm - 7pm**

Where: Reading Public Library

**Sponsored by: The Reading Children's
Cabinet**

**Facilitated by: Barbara Best, Ed.L.D.
candidate**

RSVP - Please complete the google form to register:

[Reading Community Listening Sessions](#)



WHO NEEDS TO KNOW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- Employers.
- Police officers.
- Hospital staff.
- First responders.
- Caring individuals.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

On average,
130
people die by
suicide every day.

Source: American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention

From 1999 to 2019,
841,000
people died from
drug overdoses.

Source: Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Nearly
1 IN 5
in the U.S. lives
with a mental illness.

Source: National Institute
of Mental Health

Sources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (n.d.). Suicide statistics. <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Drug overdose deaths. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/about/index.html>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (n.d.). Mental illness. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-illness/>

REGISTER TODAY!

Delivery Format:

The course is 'in person' & instructor will be Taunya L. Jarzyniecki.

Date and Time:

Tuesdays May 7, 14, 21, 28 from 5-7:30 pm (must attend all 4 sessions)

Location:

Reading Public Library, 64 Middlesex Ave, Reading, MA

Where to Register:

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/zj4c5a3>

The course will teach you how to
apply the MHFA Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm.
- **L**isten nonjudgmentally.
- **G**ive reassurance and information.
- **E**ncourage appropriate professional help.
- **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.

Local Events

Are you hosting an event that serves our students or families? Could folks benefit from the work that you're doing? Would you like to get the word out to collaborators

in the region?

Submit your upcoming events here and we will feature them in the future editions of our newsletter. Use the button directly below.

Submit Events for a Future Feature!

Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition

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