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The Prevention Council of Erie County

Substance use prevention, education and intervention since 1948

Volume 11, Issue 1

Spring 2022

Congratulations to our Own Prevention Educator Joshua Vacanti



The Prevention Council congratulates Joshua Vacanti on a successful run during the latest season of NBC's The Voice! It was so wonderful watching one of our own represent WNY on a national stage! Joshua made it all the way to the semifinals of the competition. Although he didn't take home the Voice trophy, he is still a winner and has so many accomplishments to be proud of!

His journey started last September, when he stepped on The Voice stage belting out his rendition of "Into the Unknown" from the Frozen 2 soundtrack. This performance had coaches John Legend and Ariana Grande fighting for Joshua to join their respective teams. Ultimately, John Legend used his only block

against Grande to secure Joshua's place on Team Legend. This began a very successful trajectory for Joshua as he soared all the way to the semifinals, a consistent contender for John. All of Joshua's performances are available to watch wherever The Voice is streamed, as well as on the show's official YouTube channel and across all of their social media platforms.

A highlight from Joshua's time on the show, is the message he shared during his offstage and interviewed moments. He often discussed the importance of being true to yourself, and believing in your dreams. Growing up, Joshua struggled with issues regarding his self-worth. At a young age, Joshua suffered from chronic illness and severe asthma. These ailments caused Joshua to take medications that affected his weight, and forced him to be homeschooled for extended periods of time during grade school. Joshua shared that this made him feel extremely isolated and alone. When he was in school he was often a target of bullying due to his size, voice, and personality. He questioned his uniqueness, and felt that he was flawed and unlovable. The only place he felt he could truly be himself was on the stage singing.



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THE PREVENTION COUNCIL OF ERIE COUNTY

The Prevention Council will deliver research driven education, prevention, intervention programs and services to promote and support the health and wellness of individuals, families and communities by focusing on solutions to alcohol and other drug misuse, addiction and unhealthy behaviors.

The Prevention Council will provide leadership to fight the stigma associated with addiction through public education, policy awareness, liaison with health professionals and recovering communities, by providing objective information, referral, and linkages to those in need.

Support The Council

As we continue to serve the community, please become an official "supporter" of our mission!

Your tax deductible contribution can be made at any time of the year:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ |

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for supporting The Prevention Council community efforts!

Please mail your tax deductible contribution to: The Prevention Council, 1625 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, N.Y. 14216

Under contract with the Erie County Department of Mental Health. Funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, school districts and municipalities throughout Erie County, individuals, corporations and community service organizations. Member agency of the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County.



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Check Us Out



www.eccpasa.org



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Letter from the Executive Director

Robin Mann



Spring is in the air, a time for renewal, change and growth. The Council is in alignment with what springtime has to offer.

The Prevention Council team would like to THANK and CONGRATULATE our very own Sally Yageric for the more than three decades of programming, trainings, advocacy and support she provided to thousands of individuals, families and change makers here in Erie County and beyond. We wish you all the great things retirement has to offer!!

Speaking of growth, we proudly watched our very own Joshua Vacanti on the national stage belting out beautiful melodies as a contestant on The Voice. Josh’s journey is a true example of growing beyond your hardships -- a role model for the youth with whom he works. CONGRATULATIONS!

Growth at The Council doesn’t stop there, our dedicated staff have been working diligently, continuing to provide effective programs and services. We welcome new staff to our team who will help to extend our reach into the community. The Council has expanded its programming and established new community partnerships, taking prevention programming to new heights.

As we discover our new normal and look forward to those events and activities that we enjoy in the warmer months, I challenge you to take a moment and pause for prevention. Each one of us has had a different experience living through the pandemic and have handled it in our own way. April is Alcohol Awareness month, as you plan and attend your festivities please consider healthy and safe ways to celebrate and enjoy the long awaited reunions.

In wellness,
Robin

The Prevention Council Congratulates

Karen Owens
Program Coordinator



Robin Mann
Executive Director



Renee Harns
Board President



2022 Women Making History Honorees

24-Hour Hotline:
716-834-3131

Text Line: 716-300-2338*

Live Chat: www.crisisservices.org*

*Evenings Until 11PM



Pause For Prevention

Life’s Natural Rhythm

Slowing down and listening to your own natural rhythm can quickly connect you to the Universe.

Taken from <https://www.dailyom.com>

Slowing down and listening to your own natural rhythm can quickly connect you to the Universe.
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Nature’s natural rhythms orchestrate when day turns to night, when flowers must bloom, and provides the cue for when it is time for red and brown leaves to fall from trees. As human beings, our own inner rhythm is attuned to this universal sense of timing. Guided by the rising and setting of the sun, changes in temperature, and our own internal rhythm, we know when it is time to sleep, eat, or be active. While our minds and spirits are free to focus on other pursuits, our breath and our heartbeat are always there to remind us of life’s pulsing rhythm that moves within and around us.

Moving to this rhythm, we know when it is time to stop working and when to rest. Pushing our bodies to work beyond their natural rhythm diminishes our ability to renew and recharge. A feeling much like jet lag lets us know when we’ve overridden our own natural rhythm. When we feel the frantic calls of all we want to accomplish impelling us to move faster than is natural for us, we may want to breathe deeply instead and look at nature moving to its own organic timing: birds flying south, leaves shedding, or snow falling. A walk in nature can also let us re-attune to her organic rhythm, while allowing us to move back in time with our own. When we move to our natural rhythm, we can achieve all we need to do with less effort.

We may even notice that our soul moves to its own internal, natural rhythm -- especially when it comes to our personal evolution. Comparing ourselves to others is unnecessary. Our best guide is to move to our own internal timing, while keeping time with the rhythm of nature.



Pause For Prevention

A Loving-Kindness Meditation for Connection

BY SHARON SALZBERG

Loving-kindness doesn't ask us to love every person we meet. **Sharon Salzberg** describes it as realizing how interconnected all of our lives are. In this state, we come to see how the things we love and the choices we make ripple outwards.

In this guided meditation, **Sharon Salzberg** leads us through a loving-kindness practice for connection and awareness.

1. Sit comfortably, or lie down if that's better for you.

You can close your eyes or leave them open. Let your attention settle into your body and start by taking a few deep breaths.

2. Allow your breath to be natural.

We're choosing, as an object of awareness, the silent repetition of certain phrases with ourselves as the first recipient. You can use any variation of the phrases: may I be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

3. You don't have to force a special feeling.

Just gather all of your attention behind one phrase at a time. If you find your attention wandering, or you get lost in thought, or you fall asleep, don't worry about it.

4. See if you can bring to mind someone who we will call a benefactor.

Think of someone who has helped you. Maybe they've helped you directly, or they've helped you get up when you've fallen, or maybe you've never met them. This is someone who makes you smile. If someone comes to mind, you can bring them here. Visualize them, say their name to yourself, get a feeling for their presence and offer the phrases of loving-kindness to them. Even if the words seem imperfect, that's fine. May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

5. Now, have that benefactor figure offer loving-kindness back to you.

Put yourself in the position of the recipient as your benefactor offers the phrases to you. May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

All kinds of emotions may arise. You may feel grateful, or you may feel embarrassed. Whatever may come up, see if it can just wash through you as you steady your attention on the repetition of the phrases.

Continued from page 1

As Joshua grew older he realized that he needed to celebrate who he was, and not hide it. This perspective shift allowed him to feel confident and make healthier choices both physically and mentally. Joshua tries to live his life as an example of the adult he wished he had seen growing up.

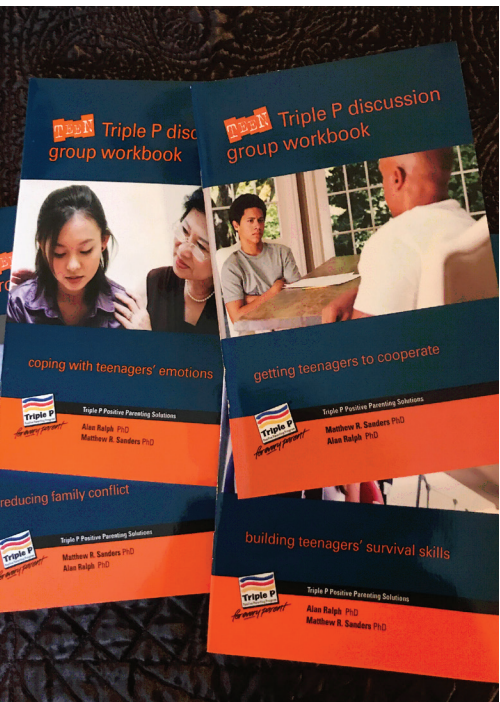
As a prevention educator, Vacanti works with students across the county discussing similar topics, such as goal-setting, establishing positive self-esteem, and learning strategies to combat bullying. We are so proud of Joshua and his vulnerability in sharing his own personal struggles with confidence, self-worth and bullying. By doing so, he reminded all who are struggling that they are not alone. Joshua even had the chance to share his talents and promote his platform on the Ellen Show!



Thank you Joshua for being an awesome human and an incredible role model! We are so excited to see what the future holds for you!



TRIPLE P Continues to Thrive



The Prevention Council of Erie County's Triple P Program (Positive Parenting Program) has been operating successfully for close to 2 years, covered by a grant through NYS OASAS. Program staff have been able to offer Zoom Group Sessions consistently throughout the pandemic. These free and easily accessible group discussion sessions allow our participants the convenience of being connected to our evidence based program regardless of social distancing requirements, challenges with transportation, or finding child care. Parent participants have reported enjoying the program due to its mix of instructional videos, resources to help guide individualized needs, ability to increase their parenting confidence, and the support and ideas from our staff to further build their skills as loving parents. In addition, Triple P has partnered with the Prevention Council's Mindfulness Enhancement Initiative. The mindfulness self-care tips have received rave reviews from our participants.

Once participants complete our five session program they typically ask, "What other supports are available?" Our program staff have been able to refer parents to The Council's Strengthening Families Program, Thursday Morning Women's Support Group, and more recently, we have begun offering individual Triple P Zoom Sessions to further care. These individualized sessions utilize Triple P Tip Sheets as a key for parents who want to continue receiving ongoing support and build additional tools and skills alongside our staff.

This month The Council will begin offering Triple P Program's Teen Group Sessions, expanding eligibility to parents of children from 12 to 18 years of age. We welcome referrals and make it easy to get connected to this world renowned evidence based program.

If you would like more information, please contact Carol Smith: casmith@thepreventioncouncil.org.

Medication Safety Program

Take It To
THE BOX

Rx

Safe Use * Safe Storage * Safe Disposal

For more information visit www.wnyprc.com

According to the CDC, each year over one million emergency room visits occur due to adverse drug effects from medication used outside of what was prescribed by a physician. Often times this can happen when we aren't vigilant with the storage and disposal of our prescriptions. When prescribed by a physician and taken as directed, medications are safe and can improve a patient's health and quality of life.

As consumers, it is our responsibility to dispose of unused and expired medications. Doing so prevents accidental harm and limits accessibility for those outside of intended use. Help prevent substance misuse before it starts by practicing safe use, safe storage, and safe disposal.

If you have any medications that need disposing, find a local drug drop off center from the list provided below or at wnycdc.com. These locations are open year round. You can also participate in one of the DEA's National Drug TAKE Back Days. These are national days of awareness that promote communities across the US to turn in unused medication. The next DEA's TAKE Back day will be held on April 22nd. Be sure to follow The Prevention Council on all our social platforms, and subscribe to our email list to receive TAKE Back Day reminders.

Medication Drop Boxes Located in Erie County

Kenmore Police Department 2395 Elmwood Avenue Kenmore, NY 14217	Depew Police Department 85 Manitou Street Depew, NY 14043	Erie County Sheriff's Substation Elma 1600 Bowman Road Elma, NY 14059
New York State University Police Bissell Hall Buffalo, NY 14260	Erie County Sheriff Substation Grand Island 1856 Whitehaven Road Grand Island, NY 14072	Erie County Sheriffs Office 10 Delaware Avenue Lobby Buffalo, NY 14202
Erie County Sheriff's Substation Clarence 6185 Goodrich Road Clarence, NY 14031	Erie County Sheriff Substation Springville 65 Franklin Street Springville, NY 14141	Canisius College 2001 Main Street Bosch Building Public Security Buffalo, NY 14208
Erie County Substation Colden 8812 State Road Colden, NY 14033	Erie County Community College North Public Safety 6205 Main Street Williamsville, NY 14221	Lancaster Police Department Criminal Justice Bldg. Lancaster Town Bldg. 529 Pavement Road Lancaster, NY 14086
Erie Community College South Public Safety 4041 Southwestern Blvd. Bldg # 5 Orchard Park, NY 14127	Erie Community Public Safety 121 Ellicot Street Buffalo, NY 14260	Town of Amherst Police Department 500 John James Audubon Pkwy. Amherst NY 14228
Medialle College Public Safety Office 2 Agassiz Circle Buffalo, NY 14214	Town of Hamburg Police S6100 South Park Avenue Hamburg, NY 14075	

Take It To
THE BOX

Rx

Safe Use • Safe Storage • Safe Disposal

Medication Safety Program

Dispose of your unused, unwanted, or expired medications
visit www.thepointny.org for locations

- Safe Use**
 - Do Not share medications
 - Take Only as prescribed
 - Ask about alternatives

Safe Storage
 - Monitor all medications
 - Lock Up medications

Safe Disposal
 - Dispose of unused, unwanted or expired prescriptions or OTC medications and syringes properly



Continuing The Fight

The Prevention Council is committed to educating the community on the effects and risks of substance use. Most recently, marijuana (cannabis) use is now legal recreationally in NYS. It is important to remember that cannabis is illegal federally and is classified as a Schedule I drug. Further, despite being legal in NYS, there are many health and safety risks attributed to its use. Moving forward, regardless of your municipality's decision to opt-out or opt-in of dispensaries and consumption sites, it's critical to be aware of theses new laws and health risks.

Below you will find the current cannabis laws for NYS as provided by the Office of Cannabis Management:

- Like alcohol, only adults 21 years of age or older may possess and use adult-use cannabis.
- Adults above the legal age limit can possess up to 3 ounces of cannabis and 24 grams of concentrated cannabis on their person, and up to 5 pounds at their personal residence.
- Like other substances, driving under the influence of cannabis will result in a DUI.
- Currently growing cannabis at home for personal use is not permitted (permitted 18 months after retail sales or if a person is a certified patient registered in the Medical Cannabis Program.)
- It is federally illegal to cross state or international borders with the possession of cannabis. Employers can enforce policies prohibiting cannabis impairment while working.

As mentioned, there are health risks and side effects to cannabis use. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shares that these effects include:

- Negative impacts on brain development, especially in youth and individuals under the age of 25.
- Slowed reaction time and coordination.
- Decreased memory, learning, attention and decision making skills.
- Increased risk of stroke, heart disease, and other vascular diseases.
- When smoked, marijuana use is linked to greater risk of bronchitis, cough, and mucus production. Smoking marijuana also causes scarring and damage to small blood vessels in the lungs, and is linked to the development of lung cancer and other respiratory diseases.
- Decreased mental health, disorientation and sometimes unpleasant thoughts or feelings of anxiety and paranoia. Users may also suffer from temporary psychosis and long-lasting mental disorders like schizophrenia.
- Marijuana poisoning and Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome.
- Negative effects on a baby's development (if used when pregnant.)



If you have any questions or if you would like more information, please contact us here at The Council. We would love to connect and be a resource for your health and safety.

Call us at: 716.831.2298
Chat via email:
thecouncil@thepreventioncouncil.org



Vanita Jamison joined The Prevention Council of Erie County in January, as the Director of Community Based Programs. She recently completed a career with 22 years of service from the federal government. Vanita has vast experience in community collaborative programming, supervision, and recruitment/retention programs. She is excited to continue working in the area of “building healthier communities,” and looks forward to being a part of the Council family.

Carol Smith is stepping into the position of Director of the Triple P Program for the Prevention Council effective January 1, 2022. She has been presenting Triple P sessions on Zoom for NYS residents for 18 months. Previously, she worked for The Prevention Council as a facilitator in our Strengthening Families Program for 20+ years. The Council’s programs are strength based, empowering interactions that lead to enhanced self-efficacy. Carol loves these programs and the dedicated Triple P team.



Paula Scaglione joined The Prevention Council in February and is excited to be part of the team in the Student Assistance Prevention Counseling /Teen Intervene Program. Paula has experience in the clinical field working as a counselor with families, adolescence, and children for the last 3+ years. Paula is looking forward to getting to know everyone as well as the programs that The Prevention Council has to offer and be an integral part of the company for many years to come.

Thank You

to the American Dental Association for which Dr. Dian Wells is a Give Kids A Smile Ambassador. Your donation of toothpaste is greatly appreciated by the Council and your community!



The Council Spreads Holiday Cheer

The Prevention Council would like to extend gratitude to St. Gregory the Great Family Faith Formation for their generous donation of holiday gifts for the families involved with our Strengthening Families Program (SFP.) For several years, under their director Joan Rischmiller, St. Gregory the Great has spread holiday cheer by providing 100 gifts to our SFP participants.

Each year, the needs and clothing sizes of both parents and children are collected in October. That information is then placed on bells for our giving tree, from which the parishioners of St Greg’s graciously purchase clothing and gift cards for each family.

The Prevention Council would like to thank the volunteers who helped load and transport all of the wonderful gifts to our donation center at St. Mary’s. We appreciate your kindness! After the wrapped donations are delivered to St. Mary’s, they are then sorted and packaged for each family.

This year’s giving tree celebration was a huge success and provided wonderful support for all of our SFP participants. We’d like to give one final shout-out to our own SFP staff members Mary and Karen! We appreciate all your hard work during this holiday season. Bravo! The Prevention Council and your community thank you!



Mary Carroll packaging gifts for SFP families at St. Mary’s.



Mary Carroll getting ready to deliver some holiday cheer to SFP families!



Sally Yageric and Mary Carroll Prepping gifts donated from St. Gregory’s.



SALLY YAGERIC

The Prevention Council of Erie County congratulates Sally Yageric on her tremendous career in prevention education and awareness. Sally has been an integral part of The Council's growth and trajectory for many years, and has solidified her legacy as an unrelenting force pioneering for positive change in our community. Her passion and commitment to the betterment of others, especially youth, has been an inspiration to all who encounter her.

Sally joined the agency in September 1984. She felt called to the field when she saw the need for substance use prevention and education services for youth in

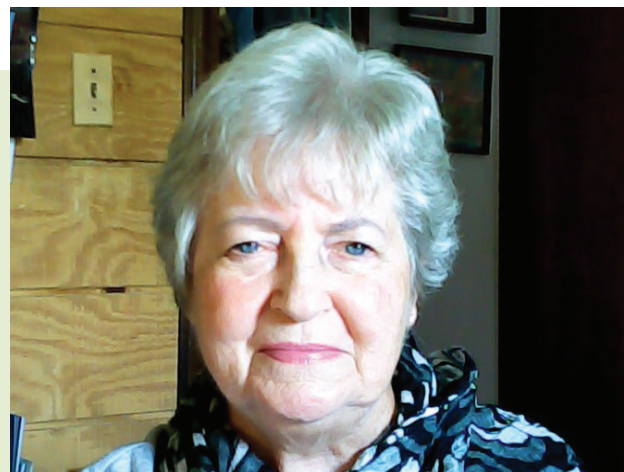
her community. After witnessing the obstacles of potential youth substance misuse through the eyes of her children, Sally volunteered with a group of parents under the direction of the Amherst Youth Board. They gathered to address the underage drinking taking place. Shortly after, money in the form of a grant from the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse became available and a small agency, the Amherst YU, was established where Sally assisted with the financial affairs of the grant. Throughout the span of her career her role has continually expanded, most recently she served as the Director of Community-Based Programs. Sally's leadership and wealth of information regarding drug trends and paraphernalia is truly remarkable, and her presence in the field will be deeply missed.

The accolades and achievements Sally has accrued while working in the prevention field have earned her the title of WNY's resident "Drug Lady." Sally helped in developing and promoting initiatives like the SafeHomes program, a nationally recognized parent pledge program advocating safe environments for young people. Sally shared that creating this program was one of her proudest accomplishments. Through her efforts, the program was published in the U.S. Department of Education Services and implemented across the globe, notably as far as Nairobi. Sally is excited to see this program revitalized in the future, and implemented alongside programs like Strengthening Families and Triple P.

Another highlight in Sally's body of work was her impacts in policy change. Sally was constantly cultivating relationships with lawmakers in order to keep public health at the forefront of policy. Sally played a major role in our current social host laws, which now includes all drugs (not just alcohol) and holds the homeowner responsible regardless of if they were present or if they were the substance supplier.



Director of Community-Based Programs Sally Yageric and Senator Ed Rath at the Amherst Senior Center Health Fair this past August.



Sally working in her home office.



Sally promoting her paraphilia and drug trends program.

Sally's determination and passion helped break boundaries and expectations of how prevention services could exist in the field. Through persistence and inventiveness she was successfully able to work alongside school municipalities to create one of the first mandated parent programs. An idea sparked by colleague Mike Nerney, Sally contacted the superintendent of Lake Shore school district to fulfill this need. Together with the aid of staff from WNY United (Matt Smith and Karen Smith,) the program was researched and developed. Gaining school support and having permission to enforce mandating a prevention program for parents was a monumental task, even today. The Council's Drug Trends and Paraphernalia program is one of Sally's favorite curriculums to facilitate. She has spent a career studying and gathering materials for this important program, and she is grateful for all the positive feedback she has received from participants. Sally is also aware that all the above mentioned programs were made possible through collaborative efforts of the amazing prevention staff, friends and supporters throughout her community.

As a prevention educator, Sally has provided workshops and trainings on various prevention topics throughout NYS and has spoken at national events including both the National Leadership Conference and Parent Corps Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws 4th Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Sally has assisted and volunteered in over 50 coalitions and community projects, and although she may be ending this chapter in her prevention work, Sally shares that she will always be involved in creating positive change for her community.

As a field, prevention has always battled overcoming stigma. Sally shared that when she began her prevention work, stigma was her biggest obstacle to overcome. Parents, schools and the community felt accepting drug prevention services and education meant they were admitting to having a problem with substance misuse. At that time, alcohol wasn't even considered a drug socially. There was an intense sense of fear and shame associated with substance use prevention, treatment and recovery services. Although navigating through stigma has gotten much easier as time has gone on, there is still an uphill battle providing services. As a part of her legacy, Sally charges the field to continue having tough conversations and asking hard questions when it comes to substance misuse. The more we collectively speak out, the faster we can break down the barriers built by stigma.

As time has progressed, so has the quality and accessibility of prevention resources. Prevention credentialing services have been adopted by the field to increase credibility and acknowledge the high standard of work in our community. A change Sally hopes to see, is an increase in the compensation and financial support for the tremendous efforts made by prevention specialists and educators. Their work makes a monumental difference in the outcomes of those at risk in our community. In order to maintain sustainability in prevention, there has to be monetary increases matching the community's service need.

Sally is grateful for the friendships she had made throughout her career, and has always felt supported and valued at The Council and in her community. Being a part of Erie County's prevention network allowed Sally to fulfill her passions, and work in a role that never felt like a "job." Sally is a life-long learner and is so thankful for all the knowledge that was passed onto her while being at the Council. Sally would also like to thank the Council's board members. Their trust and aid in our prevention efforts has made all the difference. Moving forward, Sally is ready to travel more and make memories with her family and loved ones. As mentioned, her work for prevention will never truly end as Sally plans to continue volunteering and speaking out against substance misuse.



Sally speaking on a panel at a marijuana educational training.

Congratulations Sally!