

# AwareNews

## The Prevention Council of Erie County

Substance use prevention, education and intervention since 1948

Volume 12, Issue 2

Winter 2024

## First Annual “Meat The Need” Meat Raffle



The Prevention Council extends heartfelt gratitude to everyone who joined us for our inaugural Meat Raffle Fundraiser, hosted by APS Cleanout and Foreclosure Services of WNY!

In the months leading up to the October event, our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to ensure an enjoyable evening. The night was filled with laughter, cherished moments with family and friends, fantastic music, tasty snacks, and strong community support. We are still amazed by the generosity of all who contributed to making our sold-out fundraiser a tremendous success.

The funds raised will enable our team to continue essential prevention work in Erie County and across WNY. With your support, we can now provide program supplies, service opportunities, and vital educational resources related to substance misuse, making these important tools more accessible in our community.



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### Check Us Out



[thepreventioncouncilec.org](http://thepreventioncouncilec.org)



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## Letter from the Executive Director

*Robin Mann*



Holiday time is always a time of gratitude, reflection and projection. As 2024 comes to an end, I reflect on the past events of this year and this edition of AwareNews does just that! First and foremost, I would like to take a moment and publicly thank my amazing staff for the work they do to positively impact the communities we serve. I would also like to thank my Board of Directors for their continued support. For the past several years, as a team, we have supported the community beyond that of programming. We not only sold newspapers for Buffalo News' Kids Day and volunteered with APS Foreclosures passing out hot Thanksgiving dinners and prevention information, this year we co-sponsored Utopian Euphoria's Acts of Kindness Blanket Giveaway and EM Tea Coffee Cup Café's Family Holiday Classic. These events allow us to provide prevention education at true grassroots level, and for that I am grateful.

Our evidence-based programs also continue to grow and expand. The Mindfulness, Wellness Initiative for Senior Education, Teen Intervene Community and Triple P programs are more readily available in new locations throughout Erie County. Meanwhile, our school-based programs are offered in new schools in various districts. The Council had its first fundraiser, hosted by APS Foreclosures; proceeds from the fundraiser will help to supplement program supplies, trainings, and even programming.

As I look to 2025, I am excited about maintaining and expanding our partnerships and program provisions that promote prevention education, early interventions and foster personal growth and wellness as we continue to build the best tomorrow together. I am cognizant that this time of year is difficult for some for many different reasons, and I ask that we be mindful, give grace and be supportive. The Prevention Council wishes you all a healthy and happy holiday season and look forward to seeing you in 2025!

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**crisis services**  
*this moment forward*  
**24-hour Hotline: 716-834-3131**  
Textline: 716-300-2338  
Live Chat: [www.crisisservices.org](http://www.crisisservices.org)



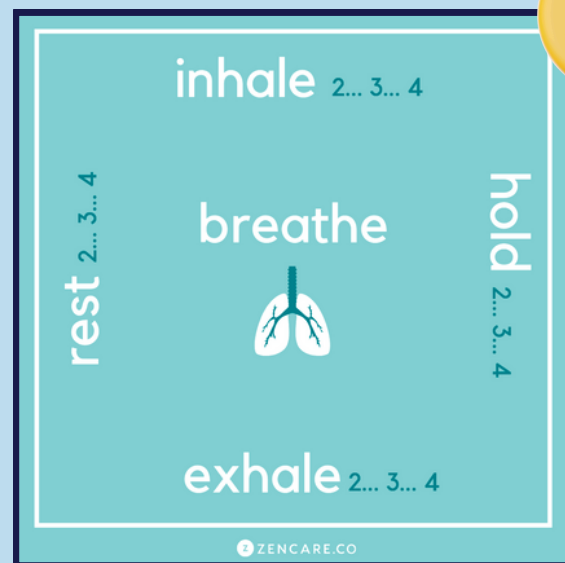
## First Annual “Meat The Need” Meat Raffle ... continued

Lastly, The Prevention Council expresses its heartfelt appreciation to our amazing sponsors for the evening. Your generosity made it possible for us to host a delightful basket raffle and provide free pizza for everyone who attended. Thank you for your invaluable support!

## “Pause For Prevention”

Breathing is a natural part of our lives, occurring every second of every day. So, why not make a conscious effort to breathe intentionally? The holiday season is filled with activity and excitement as we approach the new year. However, all this enthusiasm can sometimes become overwhelming, making it challenging to take a moment to catch your breath. Whether you're facing the stress of the season—positive or negative—or dealing with unexpected challenges, The Council wants you to know that you are not alone in your emotions. Many of us experience holiday blues and burnout. As your friends, we are here to support you whenever you need a helping hand.

A quick tip that has been helpful for us when feeling stress or anxiety is to box breathe. Box Breathing allows us to focus our breath, and push away harmful distractions. It can help us regain our rhythmic breath control, and manually aids our body to find a place of peace.



**While the holidays are typically associated with joy and celebration, they can also evoke feelings of stress, anxiety, past traumas, and challenges related to substance misuse. As we navigate this festive season, here are some important points to keep in mind.**



**What You Should Know:**

It's essential to understand that experiencing relapse or "flare-ups" is a normal aspect of the recovery journey. Common triggers may include heightened stress levels and exposure to previous substance use situations.

Holiday festivities often coincide with increased alcohol and substance consumption, leading to higher rates of accidental fatalities linked to these substances. For instance, the National Institutes of Health reports that during the holidays and New Year's, the incidence of alcohol-related fatalities in crashes is two to three times higher than during similar periods throughout the year.

**What You Can Do:**

Educate Yourself: Utilize community resources to bridge gaps in communication and understanding. For additional information to support recovery, consider reaching out to The Prevention Council. Always focus on factual information and recognize that dependency is a medical condition.

Choose the Right Time and Place: Discussing past challenges and treatment for dependency may not be appropriate during holiday gatherings or family meals. Ensure your loved one feels secure and comfortable before initiating such conversations.

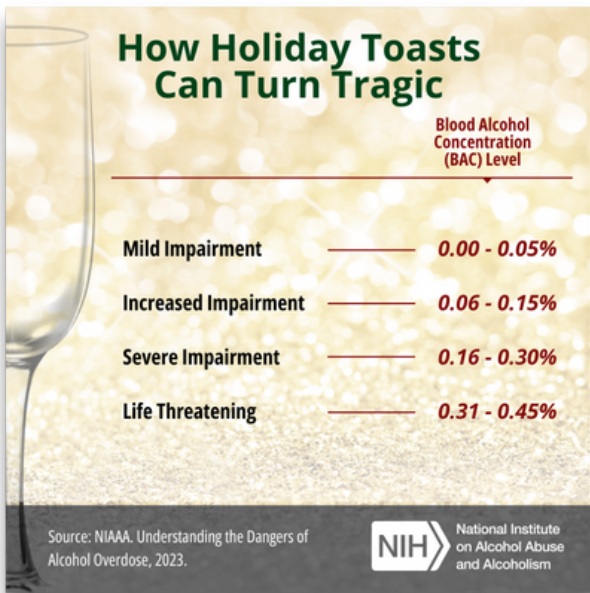
Create New Traditions: Revisiting old holiday customs can trigger memories of past traumas. Instead of relying on familiar traditions, consider starting fresh and creating new memories. Even minor adjustments, like changing the location, can significantly reduce exposure to dependency triggers.

Plan Ahead: When making holiday arrangements, be mindful to avoid places, people, and events that may jeopardize recovery. Steer clear of situations that might pressure loved ones to revert to old habits.

Be Prepared: If circumstances take an unexpected turn, have an exit strategy in place. Agree on an excuse to leave any potentially harmful situation ahead of time.

Know the Signs: The National Institute of Health encourages awareness of potential relapse indicators and poor self-care. Use the acronym HALT as a guideline for recognizing symptoms: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. For more information on identifying signs and symptoms of depression or substance abuse, visit [justtellone.org](http://justtellone.org) or [thepreventioncouncil.org](http://thepreventioncouncil.org)





**HAVE SAFE & HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON**



## Sobering Up—Myths and Facts

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

**Myth: Drink coffee. Caffeine will sober you up.**

Fact: Caffeine may help with drowsiness but not with the effects of alcohol on decision-making or coordination. The body needs time to metabolize (break down) alcohol and then to return to normal. Also, when caffeine wears off, your body will need to deal with post-caffeine sleepiness, which adds to alcohol-induced sleepiness. There are no quick cures—only time will help.

**Myth: You can drive as long as you are not slurring your words or acting erratically.**

Fact: The coordination needed for driving is compromised long before you show signs of intoxication and your reaction time is slowed. Plus, the sedative effects of alcohol increase your risk of nodding off or losing attention behind the wheel.

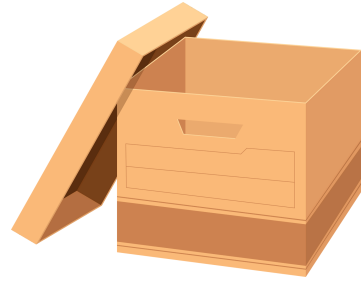
**Myth: The warm feeling you get from drinking alcohol insulates you from the cold of winter. When you're drinking, there's no need to wear a coat when it's cold outside.**

Fact: Alcohol widens the tiny blood vessels right under the skin, so they quickly fill with warm blood. This makes you feel warm or hot, and can cause your skin to flush and perspire. But your body temperature is actually dropping, because while alcohol is pulling warmth from your body's core to the skin surface, it is also depressing the area of your brain that controls temperature regulation. In cold environments, this can lead to hypothermia. So, wear a coat when it's cold outside, particularly if you are drinking alcohol.

Of course, we don't intend to harm anyone when we celebrate during the holiday season. Yet, violence and traffic fatalities associated with alcohol misuse persist, and myths about drinking live on—even though scientific studies have documented how alcohol affects the brain and body.

So, this holiday season, do not underestimate the effects of alcohol. Don't believe you can beat them, or they may beat you. Think before you drink.

# Build Your Home Winter Survival Kit



Create your perfect winter survival kit to utilize in any emergency. Also, be sure to find a safe accessible place to store it. Also be sure to regularly maintain and update your kit as needed.

## ITEMS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR HOME:



**Pro Tip:** A good rule of thumb is to have at minimum three days worth of supplies for each member of your household.

- Have a supply of medications (prescription/non-prescription two week supply) and first aid supplies
- Have extra food (Canned Foods (pull up lid, fruit, ravioli, tuna, peanut butter and jelly, bread, crackers, jello, snack bars, etc)
- Have extra water (1 gal per person/per day)
- Have a portable radio, flashlights and extra batteries
- Phone tree/contact list
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)
- Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)
- Manual can opener (for food)
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Warm clothing/blankets
- Pet Food
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Babies: (food 7-10 days, diapers, wipes, formula)
- Snowsuits in the event of power outages
- Battery operated candles
- Tea light candles
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children



The Council recently had the privilege of collaborating with Omeri Monroe from TuneWorks Media to develop a new digital campaign that emphasizes the significance of prevention and The Council. Keep an eye out for the campaign, launching in 2025.



# Welcome Aboard!

## The Council is thrilled to introduce our new Board Members



**Andrew Cheatham** is a lifelong North Buffalo resident and McKinley High School graduate (2007). After a semester at ECC, Andrew served in the US Army Reserves (2008-2016) and studied Biology at Buffalo State. He held leadership roles in telecommunications before moving to finance to address the wealth gap in the U.S. Since 2018, Andrew has worked as a financial advisor and transitioned to wealth management at M&T Bank and Key Bank. Andrew serves on several non-profit boards, and In 2023 was nominated for the Buffalo Black Achievers Award.



**Jennifer Boyce FNP-C** is a board-certified nurse practitioner with 12 years of NP experience in emergency, primary care, and addiction medicine, along with 15 years as a registered nurse in OB/GYN, end-of-life care, med/surg, and correctional nursing. Jennifer earned her undergraduate degree from SUNY Brockport and her master's from St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. She has a passion to help the community, and prevent the cycles of drug and alcohol use in families.

**Daniel J. Bobbett, Esq.** is a partner at Zdarsky, Sawicki & Agostinelli LLP. Originally from outside Syracuse, he met his wife Stephanie at Niagara University, where he graduated magna cum laude. Daniel also graduated cum laude from Syracuse University College of Law. He lives in East Amherst with his wife and three children, focusing his legal practice on high-stakes commercial litigation and property-related transactions.



**Brandi Haynes** is the Chief Programming Officer at the Community Action Organization of Western New York, managing seven departments focused on crisis services in Erie and Niagara Counties. With 14 years of experience, she is Vice-Chair of the Board at Persistence Preparatory Charter School and serves on various other boards. Brandi is also involved in the Health Leadership Fellows Program while pursuing a degree in Community and Human Services. Brandi holds a national ROMA certification and is a certified Family Development Credential Program Instructor. She graduated from Harvard Business School Club of Buffalo's Non-Profit Management Development Program and has received multiple honors.

**Bill Thomas** owns three businesses in Buffalo: APS Foreclosure Cleanout Services, Home2Mi (affordable housing), and Sign & Serve Inc. APS employs individuals transitioning from incarceration to help them reintegrate into society. He also works as a Loss Verification Specialist for the U.S. Small Business Administration and consults for Lawler & Witkowski CPA's. Bill is dedicated to community service, providing meals, firearm safety classes, and snow removal for the elderly and disabled. Since 2014, he has distributed over 550 Thanksgiving meals annually, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is active in organizations like the African American Cultural Center and the NAACP.



# Act Of Kindness Blanket Giveaway



In November, The Prevention Council proudly partnered with The Act of Kindness Blanket Giveaway to donate over 75 blankets and personal care items. We truly enjoyed collaborating with such wonderful organizations to support our community during the holiday season!



# 10th Annual Thanksgiving Meals To-Go Giveaway



The Prevention Council staff collaborated with APS Foreclosure Cleanout Services of WNY for their 10th annual Thanksgiving meal giveaway. On Wednesday, November 27th, more than 300 meals were prepared and distributed at Greater Refuge Temple Buffalo.

In addition to the meals, our team provided over a hundred Detera Disposal Bags and NARCAN nasal spray kits. We also offered a wide range of educational pamphlets and materials for participants to take home. Additionally, we held a raffle for a TOPS Friendly Markets gift card for those who signed up to join our email list.



We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the APS team and our board member Bill Thomas for organizing this invaluable outreach event. The Prevention Council staff takes pride in being part of this cherished tradition in our community, and we eagerly anticipate next year's giveaway.





## *The Council launched a new anti-vaping awareness initiative*

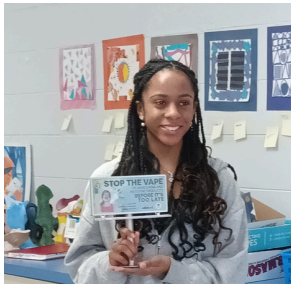
last fall, showcasing artwork created by local youth from across Erie County. Students in our community had the opportunity to illustrate the dangers of vaping, both nicotine and marijuana. The winning piece was transformed into a billboard and a bus tail graphic.

The Council extends congratulations to Trinity Washington for her exceptional winning submission.

"Legal doesn't always mean OK. And so when you're adding harmful substances or your exposing the brain to harmful substances, you are minimizing its ability to work to it's fullest potential." ~Robin Mann, executive director, The Prevention Council of Erie County



Spectrum News Article



## **Congratulations Vanita Jamison**

*Congratulations to our Director of Community Programs for being honored with the Passionate for Prevention Award at the 2024 For Our Community Unity and Support (FOCUS) Community Impact Awards!*



# TLC Summer Programming On-The-Go



This summer, the Council had an incredible time engaging with youth across the community. Our team had the pleasure of partnering once more with Say Yes at Delavan Grider Community Center during July and August. We delivered programming tailored to all age groups in their camp, incorporating essential prevention principles alongside enjoyable summer crafts.

Additionally, we collaborated with The Resource Council of WNY throughout their summer camp. This new and exciting partnership as another highlight of the season.

Furthermore, our staff conducted several standalone educational presentations for summer camps across WNY, along with various tabling events. Summer 2024 has truly been one for the books! The Prevention Council expresses gratitude to everyone we collaborated with during the warmer months, and we eagerly anticipate reconnecting in 2025!

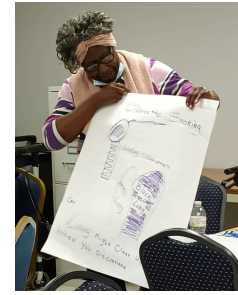
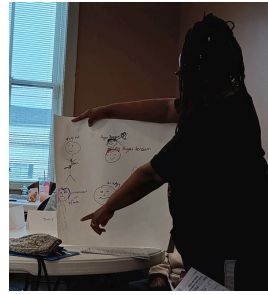


## Congratulations Darlene Zwifka

*The Prevention Council extends heartfelt wishes to Darlene for a truly deserved retirement! Having been a vital member of the Council Family for 39 years, Darlene has taken on numerous roles and has been the cornerstone that kept our agency united. While her vibrant spirit will be greatly missed, her Council family is thrilled for her as she embarks on this exciting new chapter of retirement.*

*Darlene, we are deeply grateful for everything you have contributed to The Prevention Council and the community. You are one of a kind, and we cherish the impact you've made in our agency's history.*





WISE is a national program and has been presented in many states across the country since 1996. The WISE program empowers older adults to advocate for their own health, make healthy lifestyle choices, and navigate use of medications and substances like alcohol.

**WISE Topics Include:**

- Understand aging and the significance of healthy lifestyle choices.
- Embrace the benefits of this exciting life stage.
- Identify risk factors and behaviors to avoid for better health.
- Explore the impact of alcohol, medications, and strategies to prevent misuse among seniors.
- Discover tools to empower individuals in managing their health and healthcare.

For More Info Contact  
Vanita Jamison  
(716)831-2298



The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program’s® primary aim is to equip parents with the essential skills needed to nurture healthy children. Understanding that every parent has unique needs, the Triple P program provides a variety of options for parenting support. This allows you to select the approach that works best for you and your family. The Primary series is specifically designed for parents of children aged 0 to 12 years.

For More Info Contact  
Carol Smith  
(716)831-2298

**The Triple P Primary Topics Include:** Dealing with Disobedience, Managing Fighting and Aggression, Developing Good, Bedtime Routines, and Hassle-Free Shopping with Children

**The Triple P Teen Topics Include:** Getting Teenagers to Cooperate, Coping with Teenagers’ Emotions, Building Teenagers’ Survival Skills, and Reducing Family Conflict

# Strengthening Families Program



For More Info Contact  
Karen Owens  
(716)831-2298

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is the first research-based parenting program specifically designed for substance-abusing parents with children ages six to 14 years old. Targeting families at high risk, the Strengthening Families Program provides a direct service by presenting a skill-building curriculum for both parents and children. The program focuses on enhancing family relationships, improving parenting skills, and increasing children's social and academic competencies. By fostering a supportive family environment, SFP aims to reduce the likelihood of substance use and other risky behaviors, ultimately contributing to the well-being and stability of families in challenging situations.



# AAA Drive Safe Partnership

**THE PREVENTION COUNCIL**

**MAKE PROM A NIGHT TO REMEMBER**  
NOT ONE YOU WISH YOU COULD FORGET

**CELEBRATE SOBER**

**UNDERSTAND**  
It is illegal for people under the age of 21 to consume alcohol, and it's illegal to drive drunk/drugged. Under no circumstances should prom-goers drink alcohol or participate in substance use.

**ATTENTION**  
Distracted driving is a common risk among younger drivers. During 2022 in NYS, 46,420 drivers between the ages of 16 - 20 were involved in crashes. 124 fatalities resulted from those crashes.

**PLAN**  
Talk about hiring a chauffeur. Keep the roads and teens safe with a pre-planned and capable driver.

**EXPECTATION**  
Start a conversation regarding prom safety. Share expectations for your teen and create a contract that lists out specific guidelines for the night. This sets clear boundaries for your teen to follow.

**EDUCATE**  
Driving under the influence of marijuana, opioids and alcohol can have profound effects. Car crashes are one of the leading causes of death among young people aged 16 to 19 years old.

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT THEPREVENTIONCOUNCIL.ORG FOR RESOURCES & INFO

The Council is thrilled to carry on with our prom card awareness campaign. This year's prom cards have been developed in collaboration with AAA Western and Central New York, TTNy, and Tuxedo Junction. The cards (shown in the attached graphics) emphasize the risks associated with underage drinking and promote discussions between young people and their parents about ensuring a positive and safe prom season.

Nearly 6,000 cards were distributed to schools throughout Erie County and WNY. We extend our gratitude to our partners and the schools involved for contributing to the tremendous success of this campaign!

The Prevention Council of Erie County and AAA Western and Central New York also teamed up to raise awareness among newly licensed drivers about the dangers of drunk driving. The Drive Sober bookmark campaign launched in May, and bookmarks can be obtained at your local WNY Department of Motor Vehicles or by contacting the Council directly.

**THE PREVENTION COUNCIL**

**DRIVE SAFE DRIVE SOBER**

Don't put yourself or others at risk on the road

**Prevent Distracted Driving**  
Distracted driving kills an average of 9 people and injures over 1,000 every day in the United States.

**Prevent Drunk Driving**  
Nearly 37 people die in drunk-driving related crashes every day in the United States — that's one person every 39 minutes.

**Avoid The Risk**  
Driving under the influence of marijuana, opioids and alcohol can have profound effects. Drugged driving puts the driver, passengers, and others who share the road at serious risk.

**Have A Game Plan**  
If worried you're unable to drive safely, have a pre-planned exit strategy. Use a designated driver, take public transportation, carpool, or walk instead of getting behind the wheel.

**Talk About Safety**  
Start a conversation regarding driving safety. It is important to set clear boundaries and rules to follow when on the road. Speak out if the driver of your vehicle is distracted. Don't allow yourself or others to drive impaired.

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT THEPREVENTIONCOUNCIL.ORG FOR RESOURCES & INFO



## Period Poverty Project



In the fall, Robin Mann, Executive Director gratefully accepted the generous donation from the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, Gamma Phi Omega Chapter who presented our Strengthening Families with over 1000 feminine care products from the Period Poverty Project, a National Initiative of the sorority.

The Period Poverty Project is a community service organization that advocates for menstrual equity and more freely available access to period products. It aims to improve the lives of menstruators by increasing awareness of period poverty and delivering menstrual health products to those in need

