



## MERC Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2021

Via Zoom

There were 23 people in attendance.

Donna shared that today is Mental Health Action Day. Let's think about this for a bit and during our wellness moment time at the end of the meeting, we will share some things we can do today OR start doing today to prioritize our mental health. As the helpers and caretakers and volunteers and folks who do what we do because we care about other people...we need to also remember to care about ourselves too.

1. Welcome and Introduction of New Members- Donna asked that any new people in attendance introduce themselves and share what brings them to our meeting. Why are you invested in working to support recovery? There were four new members in attendance. Welcome to MERC!
  
  2. Presentation- Jen Nagel, Porchlight Collective- Jen shared what the Porchlight Collective is doing in their three-county area. Porchlight is a harm reduction group that started in 2017. They currently have 5 volunteers who serve over 180 regular participants on a bi-weekly basis. Jen shared a PowerPoint presentation and shared her personal...and Porchlight's truth about meeting human beings who use drugs where they are. Anyone with questions can email Jen at [nageljennifer9999@gmail.com](mailto:nageljennifer9999@gmail.com) , <https://porchlightsap.org/>, or <https://www.facebook.com/theporchlightcollective>
1. Summer Plans
    - Family Support Packets- We will be reprinting and assembling more packets for distribution to support circles. We will be getting them out to treatment facilities, parole offices, churches, and any other groups we can think of. Members were encouraged to share other ideas for distribution of these informational packets. Currently, the packets contain information regarding Amare, support groups, NARCAN, 12 step groups, NAMI, and several other brochures and educational material.
  
    - Training for Family Members- We are working with Bob Carty, a national trainer and recovery expert, on a training for family members. Bob has given us several great options for topics based on what the family support committee suggested, and we are waiting on him to provide us available dates. The topics are "What does support look like within a family?" and "New ways to communicate within families". The group indicated that they would prefer to host two one-hour trainings in the evening. If one training is hosted on a Tuesday, make the next week's training on a different evening so that people have options if they are typically at another support group, etc. on one night each week. Donna will communicate all of this to Bob.

- Social Media Blitz- We have had someone doing the social media for us for the past year. He has done a nice job, and we are hoping to increase our social media presence. Donna asked anyone not currently following or liking the MERC Facebook page to take out their phones now and follow us. We will be doing a giveaway. For everyone who likes our page and shares it, we will enter names into a drawing for a \$25 gift card. We will be giving away 4 gift cards. We hope to really increase our presence before Recovery Month.
- Hiring Staff- Donna shared that new staff will be starting on Monday. A part-time person has been hired to work on the MERC project. She is also in the process of interviewing for a full-time staff person. Hopefully, that person will be in place by the next meeting. We also have at least three staff who will work on the projects in Bond and Clinton Counties...with a 4<sup>th</sup> person in the works there too. These 6 staff will work together on projects, and we will really see things start to MOVE forward. This past year has been rough, but we are not going to focus on that. The focus will be on moving forward and starting to really see things happening. Note that we will wait for new staff to be in place before finalizing plans for an Executive Council for MERC.

## 2. Recovery Month Plans

- Weekly Plans- Toni Randall reported that the three ROSC groups (MERC, Bond County Recovery Council, and the Take Action Coalition of Clinton County) will be working together on weekly plans during September (Recovery Month). The events will start with Overdose Awareness Day on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Each county will have some sort of remembrance event for Overdose Awareness Day, and then will follow up with Recovery Month events each week in September. The first week will be at select libraries in each county. We are purchasing books to donate to the libraries. We are asking the libraries to allow us to set up a table display for at least a week. We will include the books, resources, etc. The books will be donated to the libraries. We are also going to work with area faith communities to get them to include information (crafted by us so that language is inclusive) on recovery in their bulletins and hopefully in their sermons. Another week will involve daily social media posts and a Facebook Live event. Toni will speak from the perspective of a family member. Ty Bechel has agreed to join us on the event to speak from the perspective of a person in long-term recovery. We are also asking anyone who writes a column or has connections with newspaper outlets to share information regarding recovery. Deb Humphrey indicated that she writes a newspaper column regularly and will be happy to include a recovery topic.
- Publicity Plans- Donna asked for assistance in publicizing the Recovery Month events.
- Amare – Rockin’ for Recovery- Jean Schram shared that Amare is planning to do Rockin’ for Recovery again this year. It will be held at the Bethalto Homecoming grounds. The three local ROSC groups will be sponsors of this event. No date has been finalized. Jean will share information as she has it.

3. Wellness Moment- Sonja Vauters could not join us today and she normally does our Wellness moment. As was discussed earlier, today is Mental Health Action Day. Donna asked members to share what they are doing for their mental health and well-being. Several members shared about prioritizing diet and exercise, reading, getting some sunshine, being OK with saying “no”, and letting it be OK when you cannot do everything. Great suggestions to remember today and every day.

4. Announcements, Events- Members shared the following announcements:

- Amelia shared in the chat box that through a grant called Rx Playbook, they will host an Athletic Clinic virtual conference featuring Lauren Cosentino (Athletic trainer from Athletico) and Bailey Cartwright (former Notre Dame Soccer player). The training will cover the importance of athletic injury and recovery and will touch on the opioid epidemic and how it impacts student athletes. Amelia will send Donna the flyer to be distributed to the group.
- Donna shared that it is important to always remember that we are trying to create change in how people who use drugs or are seeking or maintaining recovery are supported in our communities. We may not always agree, but everyone is welcome. We value you and your opinions. We may challenge each other, but we will always do that respectfully and with good intentions. We will all meet each other where we are and try to continue to do great work in our communities.
- Our next meeting is on June 17<sup>th</sup> at 9am. We will continue to meet via Zoom.