



MERC Meeting Summary

Aug 20th, 2026

Presentation:

Christina Foster after the loss of 3 brothers to suicide and a best friend to a drug overdose and getting clean off drugs herself, Christina Foster Beegle started "Foster's Light in the Dark" nonprofit 501(c) to create a Memorial Park in Madison County, Illinois for families to have a place to honor their loved ones lost to Suicide or Drug Overdose.

- Families who can't afford a burial place can honor them in our memorial park!
- Our MISSION is to be a place the community can honor loved ones lost to drug overdose and suicide. To raise awareness and to prevent such losses.
- Our VISION is to be a light of Hope in the darkness that suicide and drug overdose brings.
- We raise awareness to not only be a voice for these victims but to also try to help others find a way out of the darkness that mental illness and addiction bring!
- We provide lived experience which brings more knowledge than any school can teach. Unfortunately, we have lived experience with both!
- We want the community to know that their loved one will not be forgotten and give them Hope that people do care.
- You can reach Fosters Light In The Dark at 1-618-225-9357 for information or check out their Facebook page.

Discussion Items:

- MERC is working with our community partners and council members to plan a Movie Night in the Park Sept 25/26. This will be a family-friendly stigma reduction event available to the public. MERC will be sharing resources related to recovery/treatment efforts and community partners are welcome to attend.
 - What we still need: Snacks/Drinks, help with set up & Possible location (outdoor preferred). If you would like to partner with us on this event or provide materials/food, please reach out to Mark or Katie.
- We have sent out an evaluation survey to assess how we can improve things that we can improve. Here is the link once again <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LFM365V>, we value your input! We are closing the survey on Sept. 4th so please give us a couple minutes and let us know... Thank You

Workgroup updates:

- Thanks so much to those who have attended our workgroup meetings. If you have volunteered in the past to participate in one of the work groups, please contact Mark/Katie to confirm you're still able to participate, we encourage all members to add their experience, strength and hope. With Gratitude Thank you.

Announcements/upcoming events:

- Please see all attached flyers for the upcoming events:
- At the Edwardsville Library there are monthly Stigma Conversations along with a Naloxone Demonstration. The next event will be held Sept 15th at 6pm. Check the Library Facebook page for upcoming schedule. A link to the Facebook page can be found on their website [Home | Edwardsville Public Library](#).

Council Members in Attendance:

Alexa Plant-Clinton/Bond County ROSC	Jovanna Herron-CHS Metro Link
Amanda Taul-TASC	Katie Wilson-Madison County ROSC
Angella Holloway- St. Clair County ROSC	Kathy Kerher-CHS
April Jenkins-C&T Transportation Service	Kenlea Avello-MCHD
Ashley Ramos- AlforusHelp	Kirsten Peterson-Director OBK
Bev Holland- CHS Region 5 TA	Kristen Anderson-CHS
Chelsea McGriffin-PLE Community	Lindsey Minor-St. Francis Way Clinic
Cheyney Evans-Director of Outreach & Ed	Melanie Williams-CHS
Christina Foster-Fosters Light In The Dark	Mark Knott-Madison County ROSC
Christina Manchen-CCBHC Coordinator	Mike Luther-CHS OEND/DOPP
Centerstone	Nadine Rickoff-IDPH
Conswala Jones-St. Clair County ROSC	Paul Fischer-Porch Light Collective
Cora Hughes- United Congregation of	Quinella Pernermon-TASC
Metro East	Sheridan Jordan-Clinton County ROSC
Dustin Percy- Oxford House	Stephanie Everheart-CHS
Elyse Schoen-St Josephs	Towana Howard-St. Clair Health Dept.
Gregory Santoni-TASC	Violette Book- CHS/OEND Team
Jen Nagel-Fischer-Porchlight Collective	

Guest in attendance

Laura Kane-Founder of Marshmallows Hope

MERC Upcoming Zoom Meeting

**Sept 17th, 2026, at 9am/ Target group meeting TBD we will
send a zoom link the day before the meeting**

Metro East Recovery Council (MERC) Vision:

A community system that nurtures and supports individuals and families seeking or maintaining recovery for themselves or a loved one.

Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) Mission:

Collaborating to build and empower communities of recovery.