



SAFE

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

News and Events December 2024



Did you catch #27 Marcellas Dial's SAFE Coalition cleats in the December 1st Patriots game against the Indianapolis Colts? We were honored to be chosen as Marcellas' charity for the "My Cause, My Cleats" NFL campaign!



NEWS AND NOTICES

A complete list of [SAFE programs](#) and [events](#) can be found on our website.

New! Perinatal Support Group

In partnership with Hockomock YMCA, this 6-week group course is hosted by licensed social worker and meets weekly with moms from pregnancy up to 1 year after birth. It focuses on new topics and tools each week like mindfulness exercises, skill-building activities, journaling and more. Babies welcome. Diaper bank, mental health resource connection, SNAP benefits, YMCA resources and more are available during the program. Free to attend, [learn more and register here](#) or contact brynnek@hockymca.org to register. Starts Weds. Jan. 22, 12-1:30pm.

Narcan Trainings

Interested in learning how to administer lifesaving medicine that reverses the effects of overdose from opioids like fentanyl, heroin, morphine, and oxycodone? Join an [upcoming SAFE Narcan training](#), free to the public and no registration required.

- December 27th: Foxborough Town Hall, 11am
- January 2nd:
 - Norfolk Public Library, 9–10am
 - Medway Public Library, 10:30–11am
 - Fiske Public Library in Wrentham, 11:30-noon

Or stop by the SAFE office for a 30-minute training session between 10am–1pm, Mon–Thurs. [Email us](#) to schedule a session.

Drop-In Hours

Visit our office hours specifically for residents to meet with a SAFE clinical social worker for resources, questions and concerns related to mental health and substance use.

Brought to you by Medway and Wrentham Town Opioid Funds, respectively:

- January 16th:
 - Medway Public Library 10-11am
 - Fiske Public Library in Wrentham 11-noon

We Need Diapers!

SAFE Diaper Bank provides diapers and wipes free of charge to anyone in need and we need your help to keep our shelves stocked! ([need diapers? click here!](#)) We can also repack opened packs. All sizes and styles appreciated. [Email us](#) to arrange a drop-off or [purchase on our Amazon wishlist](#) to ship directly to SAFE.



Our Doors are Open

Drop by SAFE Cafe on Fridays 8:30am-12pm to share a cup of coffee, see SAFE's space, meet a member of our team, and discover offerings that work for you

SAFE SPOTLIGHT: DR. STEPHANIE HEATH



Stephanie is our Community Outreach Coordinator and the newest edition to the SAFE Coalition staff. She is already an indispensable part of our work.

Steph is a clinical social worker and her role at SAFE is to help individuals address their mental health and substance use concerns and to connect them with resources they may need. She works with people one-on-one to set and meet goals, hosts walk-in counseling sessions in the community and at SAFE, conducts Narcan trainings around the community and so much more.

And look for Steph at the YMCA next month when she launches SAFE's Perinatal Support Group for moms of newborns and babies!

Whether jumping in to help an unexpected client need, serving as our data guru (we know and love a Steph footnote when they see one!), running world-class Narcan trainings and WhyTry sessions, or supporting our walk-in SAFE Cafe with her calm and comforting presence, Steph brings her best to everything she does.

We already can't remember a time without her (and don't care to!). Thank you, Steph, for bringing your best, and helping us bring out our best in turn!



Perinatal Support Group

Noon–1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays
6-week program
starting Jan. 22

Bernon Branch YMCA
45 Forge Hill Rd, Franklin



This free support group combines peer support and therapy to foster healing, connection, and community for expectant and postpartum moms.

Registration required: tinyurl.com/SAFEperi

Learn more and register here

We Need Volunteers!

We need your help to bring care and awareness to our community. Let us know if you have even a little time to step in and offer your support.

[Learn More](#)

THE BIG STORY

SAFE Coalition: A Look Back, A Look Ahead



Ribbon cutting at our first office in Norfolk, February 2020

As we reflect on the growth 2024 has brought to our size and scope, we wanted to take a look back at where we began. Not everyone knows that SAFE's inception was a

community-led effort, paving the way for a methodology we center in everything we do. This month, we sat down with co-founders Jen Levine and Jim Derick to talk about where SAFE started and where we're headed in the coming year.

In 2015, Franklin native Jen was returning home from her job in southern CA as a social worker with at-risk youth when she noticed that Franklin was experiencing a wave of loss and suffering owing to a rise in opioid use. Jim was witnessing the crisis first-hand as his son received a diagnosis of substance use disorder and began treatment.

JEN: I felt there was an invisible, excruciating, community issue that no one spoke about. I was even more surprised to learn that there were zero, absolutely no resources. Coming from California with so many access points to care, it was baffling to me that even our systems of care were shrouded in stigma and lacked education around addiction and recovery.

JIM: To put it in a word, that time was terrifying. Imagine your child being diagnosed with an illness which is chronic and potentially terminal and having nobody to speak with about it. With professionals, I didn't know where to turn. None of them knew how to respond other than to send you to a hotline. It was frightening and alienating. And I couldn't speak to family, neighbors, or friends about the most important thing in my life which was saving my son's life. No one had the language or permission structure to even talk about it at that time. I had a friend going through the same thing with his son and we didn't even know it. You just didn't talk openly about any of it like you can now. The world has really changed in that respect.



Meeting with Ed Markey at the National Opioid Conference in Atlanta, 2016

Jen reached out to State Representative Jeff Roy and coordinated a panel discussion at Franklin High School to address communal concerns. First responders, local and state politicians, people working in the courts, and concerned citizens convened to discuss the scope of the issue and figure out next steps.

JEN: I remember that night so well. I was rushing from my other job and picked up my mom at her house. She asked if I had anything prepared to speak on and I told

her I didn't even think anyone would come. She immediately went to the recycling bin and handed me an empty neon-colored notebook. She told me I needed to look prepared and hold something. When we pulled into the parking lot, there were so many cars. The crowd of over 200 people that night lit a fire in me. We had so many sectors of the community talking about how they were impacted by the epidemic. I did end up speaking that night and my mom was right, I totally needed a notepad!

JIM: I happened to be back from a [physical therapy] treatment for my son in Florida and was driving along and saw a sign blinking on Rte 140 that said "opioid mtg tonight Franklin High". I could not believe someone out there had actually elevated this issue. I thought there'd be a conference room with 5 people. It was 200 people. The mood was terrified. Angry. Frustrated. Confused. Everybody had an opinion on how we could fix this. But the one thing it wasn't was judgmental. All ideas were welcome.

When I say nobody, I mean nobody was talking about this stuff at that time. So, this was unreal. I got up on the stage that night and introduced myself to Jeff and told him I wanted to be involved with whatever came out of this.



First meeting at Franklin High, June 2015

Over the next 6 months, a coalition of 50 volunteers came together to voice their ideas on what support could look like. They gathered information to better understand the issues they faced and create an informed approach. Together, they designed a structured, sustainable, community-centered path to understanding substance use disorder. This was the birth of the SAFE Coalition.

JEN: We had so many people, so many ideas, there was so much to do - and the biggest question came with where we start. Like any new start-up, this was messy and so necessary. The first true project was a notebook called What Do We Do Now, a manual for police departments to give to households when they arrived at the scene of an overdose. We all pulled money together for the first printing of this. It was a step-by-step guide, and bright green so it would be hard to lose. That is where SAFE got its signature green coloring from! From there we began speaking with community members, listening to their experiences, learning about the gaps in care they were facing, and building relationships with care providers. This sounds seamless, but most of us were working full time and meeting with community members at night or on the weekends.

JIM: Jen and I, we had no money. Zero dollars. We decided to focus on one area, reducing barriers to treatment. We became allies to police for people who were detained with controlled substances, and we helped people get into detox centers

and get treatment. At this point, police were not thinking treatment over arrest at all. So, we worked quickly to build relationships with other towns. We became a resource in many different towns for people who were trying to get to treatment centers. We were also educating the public on substance misuse, risks, and how to identify those things. But it was all bootstrap and very grass roots.



Early Hidden in Plain Sight display, 2016

As the SAFE Coalition developed, opportunities for further support emerged. Today, we offer local support groups for individuals and families, early intervention diversion courses for teens and adolescents, 90-day one-on-one support services, Narcan and CPR training and Narcan distribution, referral services, teen mentorships, medication take-back days, county-wide Overdose Awareness Day memorials, community events, trauma-informed yoga, a diaper bank, car seat bank, Santa Foundation partnership and more.

JEN: Jeff Roy has always said to me, 'You must!' And this phrase rings in my mind more than a few dozen times a week. When we started this, I was hosting a small family support group at the YMCA in Franklin. I was loving my career, happy to be helping community members, and yet I knew so much more could be done. Dreaming of what SAFE could be was so scary. It meant I needed to take so many leaps of faith, without a parachute and with a lot of public options on what we were

creating. I think I was most significantly impacted and influenced by those who believed we could do this, and mainly by those who kept coming back for more care. They believed in use as we believed in them. Paul Farmer is a hero to me. He always said, "dèyè mòn, gen mòn". When you solve one problem, you may be faced with another. It's a Haitian saying and I find it deeply inspiring and grounding. While SAFE has grown and supported thousands, there is still so much to do, and I am so happy to be a part of this.

JIM: In 2015, we were labeled correctly as an opioid organization. We were born out of the opioid crisis and our primary response was seen as a response to that specific crisis. Jen knew that the bigger picture was tying together these threads like domestic abuse, mental health, poverty, and other social factors that have a strong correlation with substance use. Today, we are a communal vessel that holds space for all these interconnected and intersecting problems. We are able to respond and flex to emerging needs as they occur in real time, with a team of people that has the ability to discern where our time, talent, and treasure is best spent. The question has never been "is this the right thing to do?" We ask, "Is it an emerging and urgent need, and do we have the subject matter expertise to respond?" If the answer is yes, we figure out how to get in and make an impact. It's not the plodding, slow, low-risk pace of most nonprofits. We have something different. We have an entrepreneurial spirit.



Receiving the YMCA Red Triangle Award, 2017

While the SAFE Coalition has increased opportunities for hope, support, and recovery, we have only been successful in these endeavors because of trusted partnerships with local agencies and organizations. The SAFE Coalition is incredibly proud of the work with local police, fire, educational systems, political leaders, spirituality groups, non-political service organizations, veterans groups, judicial systems, public and private agencies, affected families and many others.

Looking toward 2025, we are prepared to settle into so much more: more harm reduction work and clinical care for youth; elevating the conversation around family recovery in the region; launching an online diversion program to enhance access and creating bi-lingual materials; building out three new support groups and creating partnerships with more school systems, and more.

JEN: I am so thankful for every person connected to SAFE, and none of this work would be possible without each and every single one. While I am a co-founder, they are the engine that keep these opportunities available to community members.



SAFE is proud to offer support services to community members facing housing insecurity. From needs assessments to housing placement, medical and Social Security benefits, SMOC referrals and more, we are working to help people find safe and stable housing that works for them.

[Learn More or Request Support](#)

Grandparents *Raising* Grandchildren



SAFE
YOU ARE NOT ALONE

6:30–7:30 PM
2nd & 4th Thursdays

Free childcare!

Bernon Branch YMCA
45 Forge Hill Rd
upstairs meeting room

Online option available

Email info@safecoalitionma.org
to register or to receive Zoom login



PHOTO GALLERY

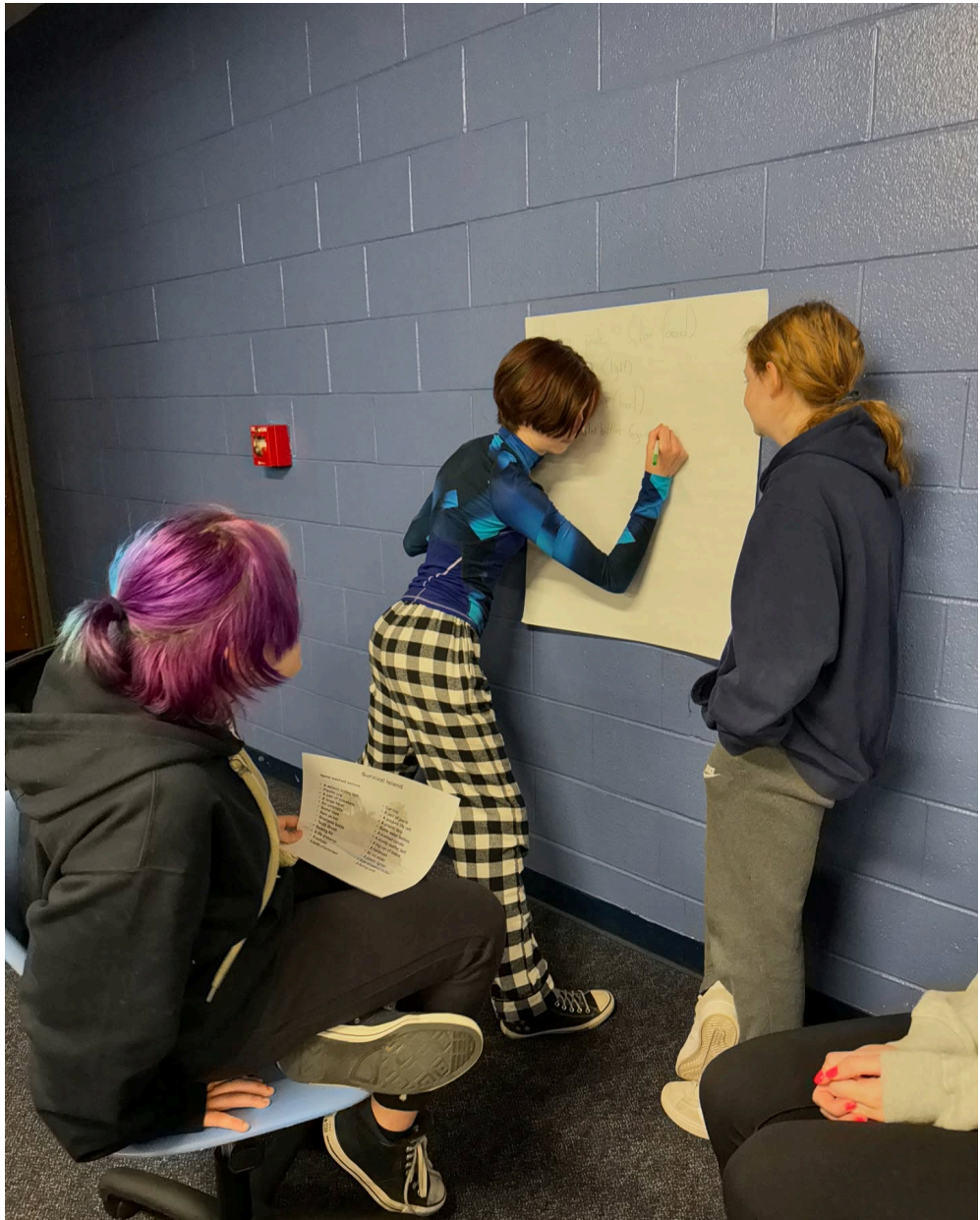
THIS MONTH AT SAFE

It's been a busy month at SAFE! Thank you to everyone who attended Narcan trainings, Saturday yoga classes, adolescent WhyTry courses, our *Recovery City* film screening and director's talk, Ribbons of Recovery art installation, thank you to Liz for her beautiful art for Bluestone Bank's diaper drive, and to the NFL, Patriots and Marcellas for helping bring awareness to SAFE.















Help us continue this life-changing work
Make your holiday gift to SAFE today

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