



Join us in remembering those lost to overdose on August 31st, International Overdose Awareness Day. See our list below of memorial vigils and flag placing ceremonies near you.

NEWS AND NOTICES

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

Overdose Awareness Day Events

August 31st is International Overdose Awareness Day. Join us in commemorating those lost to overdose at the following community events. No registration required, free and open to the public:

- Franklin OAD Vigil, Sat. Aug. 31, 6-7 p.m. Franklin Town Common
- Wrentham OAD Vigil, Sat. Aug. 31, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Wrentham Town Common
- OAD Flag Placing, Weds. Aug. 28, 10 a.m. Franklin, Wrentham, Millis, Medway, and Norfolk Commons
- Plainville OAD Flag Placing, Sat. Aug 31, 10 a.m. Municipal Complex Front Lawn

We are looking for volunteers to assist with set up and tear down. [Contact SAFE](#) to let us know your availability and interest.

Trauma-Informed Yoga

This practice is a centering, movement-based activity that is sensitive to trauma triggers and teaches participants how to recognize trauma-associated spikes in one's nervous system. Led by Michelle Palladini, Norfolk deputy chief of police and founder of the L.E.A.P. program, who is active in providing knowledge and training to the community, focusing especially on trauma, empowerment, and wellness. 8:30-10:30am every Saturday starting Sept 7.

SAFE After Dark Featuring The Elastic 5

Calling all musicians, poets, comedians and artists! Please join us for an open mic for artists of all types and abilities welcome-- music, spoken word, comedy, poetry and more. Music with Boston-based tribute band The Elastic 5 to follow! Saturday, Sept. 21, 6:30-9:30pm at SAFE. [Email](#) for more info and to sign up to perform.

Narcan Training

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.

Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 1, and Dec. 1:

- Norfolk Public Library, 9–10am
- Medway Public Library, 10:30–11am
- Wrentham Public Library, 11:30am–noon

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

We Need 2T-5T Diapers!

SAFE Diaper Bank provides diapers and wipes free of charge to anyone in need and our supplies are critically low ([need diapers? click here!](#)). Hosting a barbecue, birthday party or pool party? Consider making it a Diaper Drive event by asking guests

to bring donated diapers and wipes for SAFE. We can also repack opened packs and accepts diapers at every size. All sizes and styles appreciated, 2T-5T are especially low at this month. [Email us](#) to arrange a drop-off.

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

Bill Hawkes: Treatment Advocate



This month we pause to honor a trusted and valuable partner of ours, William "Bill" Hawkes.

Bill is above all else, a man living in long term recovery. Professionally, he works with Recovery Centers of America as a Treatment Advocate and it is in this capacity that we first met him. We know Bill to be someone who has dedicated himself personally to helping others achieve recovery. And he stops at nothing to do that.

The most unique thing is he is always focused on what can he do for the people we're collaborating together to help. He has moved mountains to get people help in ways we have simply never seen before.

He is passionate about serving others, always available for people we're working with to access any level of treatment. Simply put, Bill is a champion for those who need it most.

We are forever grateful for his guidance and commitment to those served by SAFE Coalition.

THE BIG STORY

Tree of Life Project Offers Celebration and Commemoration



Each August, we take time to pay tribute to the toll overdose takes on our communities.

To the heartbroken friends and family members of lost loved ones.

To activists who fight for policy reform.

To healthcare and harm reduction workers.

To unwavering advocates.

Overdose can affect anyone, so we remember the tenacity of our community and lean into the power we wield when we work together.

SAFE's Tree of Life memorial expands on the spirit of Overdose Awareness Day, providing year-round remembrance and tribute to those who have suffered, fought, and offered their support to this cause.

The Tree of Life exists as a floor-to-ceiling mural greeting everyone who walks through SAFE's doors. Anyone can sponsor adding a name to a leaf, whether to celebrate recovery, acknowledge advocacy, or as a life tribute.

Founded in 2020 by board member Mary Graham Louise, the initiative was launched to create a permanent, tangible site of remembrance, celebration, and awareness-raising right here at SAFE.

For those who have endured the stigma of overdose, the Tree of Life offers a rare chance for compassionate and judgement-free commemoration. "This initiative exists to say that we see each other," says SAFE Co-Founder Jim Derick, "even through addictions and scenarios that have been traditionally stigmatized. The Tree is an affirmative statement that there is no shame in these illnesses, and we can forge connection not in spite of, but through these struggles."



Derick also sees the Tree of Life as a way to offer public support and build consensus around destigmatization. “Oftentimes, we underestimate how important it is to provide positive affirmation to people who are in the fight for their lives in a disease that is so heavily stigmatized, or for those going through bereavement,” says Derick. “One good word, one positive action, can literally change their trajectory at any given day or time.”

The Tree of Life also affords a rare opportunity to celebrate recovery in a society where addiction stigma is so powerful, it can even overshadow recovery. “This is a community’s expression that someone’s recovery matters,” says Derick. “Here is where we publicly acknowledge someone’s recovery in a way that our

society just doesn't do elsewhere.”

With every leaf added to the Tree of Life memorial, SAFE expands our community of advocates, supporters, and compassionate voices. Each contributor quite literally becomes a part of our physical space and, hopefully, a messenger for our mission to ensure that no one needs to go it alone.

Funds raised from the sale of leaves go toward furthering SAFE’s mission to provide community-wide, judgement-free support across a spectrum of substance use and mental health issues. As Derick puts it, those who add leaves aren’t just donors, they are stewards of the SAFE mission itself. "It is an act that says, 'This is an important place and I’m going to help care for it,'" Derick says.

For more information on becoming part of the Tree of Life initiative, see [SAFE's website](#) or [contact us](#).



We Need Fall Volunteers!

We need your help to bring care and awareness to our community this fall season. Check out our volunteer

events calendar today and sign up for a time and place to make a real difference in someone's life.

[Learn More](#)

FAMILY RECOVERY CORNER



Be There. Reach Out. Be the Connection.

Submitted by Robyn Heisey

I met with Jim Derick at SAFE Coalition in Franklin, MA on a humid, overcast summer morning to talk about his son Jack in the weeks before Overdose Awareness Day, August 31. Jim is exhausted these days, exhausted trying to navigate a grief he describes as "GRIEF in all-caps".

The following are a few facts about Jim:

- Jim is one of the (main) reasons that SAFE Coalition exists today
- Jim has a heart the size and breadth of the state of Texas; he is there for anyone either suffering directly or indirectly from the disease of addiction
- On July 15, 2022, Jim suffered the greatest loss of his life when his son, Jack died from a fentanyl overdose

"I thought grief would be a linear process," Jim said, "but it's not." For many years, Jim thought that his love and great efforts alone could and would save Jack. But after finding Learn to Cope, a meeting for families of those suffering from addiction and/or mental illness, he realized that he was powerless when it came to Jack's struggles. By working the 12 steps, Jim loosened the reins of control on Jack and his choices. Ultimately, he grew to accept and love Jack as he was, sometimes sober, sometimes not. Always his son. Always worthy of his love.

Following are some facts to share with you this Overdose Awareness Day:

- Drug overdose fatalities in the US have increased from 11,155 in the year 2000 to 107,543 in 2023. Opioids like fentanyl are largely responsible for this increase.
- Fentanyl-related deaths in the US have more than doubled in 4 years from 36,359 in 2019 to 73,654 in 2022.
- More than 2,000 people die per year in Massachusetts from opioid related overdoses. This number has more than quadrupled since 2010

For Jim and many like him who have lost loved ones to addiction, these facts are gut-wrenchingly personal. When Jack was 11 years old and suffering from anxiety, Jim did what any good parent would do. He took him to the doctor. And what did the doctor do? Prescribe Jack Xanax, a drug that today is considered a controlled substance, adding gasoline to the fire of addiction that was already smoldering in Jack.

"Here we are in 2024," Jim said, "coming close to reaching a cure for cancer. We are sending people routinely back and forth to space. Biomedically, we're more advanced than we've ever

been. But this opioid epidemic, spawned by big pharma and the medical community, continues to take the lives of over 80,000 people in the US alone per year. We cannot," he emphasized, "lose sight of the magnitude of this illness."

Jim asks for a call to action. What can you, a friend, relative, or ally do? You can:

- [Get trained to administer Narcan](#)—and keep Narcan on your person/in your glove compartment
- Advocate for legislative change that supports Harm Reduction, such as Overdose Prevention Centers
- Help reduce stigma by talking with neighbors, family and friends about Substance Use Disorder
- Reach out to neighbors, family and friends when you see someone suffering from addiction. Be there

A beautiful example of being there happened three months after Jack died. Caleb, a member of a support group Jim attended, ran the London marathon in Jack's honor. Wearing a t-shirt with JACK written boldly (in all-caps), Caleb ran the streets of London, holding up Jack's prayer card, so he could "see" the streets of London. "We did it for Jack," Caleb said in the note he mailed to Jim along with the t-shirt he wore, and the medal he received for running the marathon.

Although we may be powerless (step 1) over addiction itself, we are anything but powerless when it comes to de-stigmatizing addiction. Addiction is a disease of isolation. Be part of the solution. Reach out and talk to that neighbor, that friend, that family member, and make that CONNECTION.

Thank you, Robyn, for your beautiful contribution this month.

PHOTO GALLERY

THIS MONTH AT SAFE

We thank Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce and 1776 Financial for collecting thousands of diapers for SAFE this month! Their generous donations helps supply the only diaper bank in our area for caregivers in need. To date, SAFE has provided over 10,000 diapers and more than 90 car seats to support kids in our community.

SAFE also thanks Michelle Palladini for her incredible, sold-out talk on mindfulness and resilience. Stay tuned for more mindfulness events in the future!







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

Donate



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