



SEEDS of CHANGE

Where the healing begins



Working to create a society free of domestic and sexual violence and the harms of substance use.

FALL 2021

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A Silent Epidemic 2
- Prevention Highlight 2
- Volunteer Spotlight 3
- Our Impact 3
- Volunteer Opportunities 3
- Giving to Mutual Ground 3
- Upcoming Events 4

Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

For more than 45 years, thousands of individuals of all ages, from all walks of life, have trusted Mutual Ground to provide life-changing services that have empowered them to face the challenges of domestic and/or sexual violence. Hopefully you have heard the news – now we are able to provide those same, quality services to those struggling with substance use disorder. In February of 2021 our merger with Breaking Free, and our acquisition of their services, was official. We are proud to say that we are now serving the community with expanded services that allow us to fight against the stigma of domestic violence, sexual violence, and substance use. We are here to help ANYONE struggling with one, or more, of these issues! Expanding our impact in this way has been challenging... but incredibly rewarding. We look forward to updating you on our progress in the future!

I also wanted to let you know Mutual Ground has been taking Covid and the new Delta variant incredibly seriously. We have continued to take all necessary precautions to keep our clients and staff safe. We have never stopped being diligent about staff and clients wearing masks, and have hefty cleaning measures in place. We want to, and plan to, stay open for the people who need us! Although we are back to allowing in-

person counseling and therapy sessions, we are still providing telehealth services for those who prefer it, or deem it necessary for their circumstances. This relates to our Mutual Ground domestic and sexual violence services, as well as our new Breaking Free addiction programming.

Unfortunately, the need for our services is skyrocketing – most accurately, the demand for our counseling services is beginning to outpace our ability to provide those services. The mental health challenges related to Covid have left individuals and families struggling with elevated feelings and challenges. Your help and support are getting us through these challenging days.

Thank you for being a supporter of Mutual Ground!! We could not do our important work without you, our community, and our partners.

Sincerely,

Michelle Meyer

Michelle Meyer - Executive Director

Mutual Ground's Black & White Ball is on October 15, 2021!



JOIN US
for this incredible event
filled with food, drinks,
live music and laughter

– all to support Mutual Ground!

We would like to spread the word that domestic violence, sexual violence, and substance use are not always black and white issues in terms of the victim's feelings and options. There are many shades of gray and Mutual Ground is here to support anyone going through a crisis related to these issues. It's a Black and White Ball! So, we are asking all of our guests to come dressed in black, white or any shade of gray, including silver!

To purchase your ticket to the event visit:
www.mutualground.org/black-and-white-ball



SCAN ME

When

Friday, October 15, 2021

Time

6:00 PM - 11:00 PM

Where

Arista Hotel

2139 City Gate Lane, Naperville, IL 60563

Mutual Ground
418 Oak Ave.
Aurora IL 60506

mutualground.org
www.breakingfreeinc.org
(630) 897-0084



A Silent Epidemic

It may be hard to believe, but there has been an epidemic taking the lives of people every day, long before COVID hit. It is the Opioid Overdose Epidemic. This epidemic has caused approximately 81,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States in 2020. This is highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period and a 29% increase from 2019, according to recent provisional data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Drug use in the United States has continued to increase, and the nature of this crisis has gotten progressively worse with each passing year. The death toll from drug use has always been a problem, however, during the last two decades in particular, we have seen the drug problem develop into a health crisis and now a national public health emergency.

An opioid overdose occurs when opioids overwhelm receptors in the brain causing the body to shut down slowly. While overdoses can be caused by any opioid drug, including prescription pain medication, many of the overdose deaths recently are linked to a synthetic opioid called, fentanyl. This commonly illicit manufactured drug was originally designed to sedate large animals, like elephants, but has unfortunately made its way to the drug market. This drug gets 'cut in' with street drugs, like heroine, to increase the amount of substance available so dealers are able to sell more product and make more money. Unfortunately, sometimes dealers themselves do not know how potent the fentanyl is

and how lethal of a dose they are selling. Whether on purpose or accident, fentanyl use seems to be rising causing a direct link to overdose deaths.

It is important to remember that addiction is not a choice it is a disease, and overdose can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Overdoses usually occur over 1-3 hours after a substance is used. The good news is that most overdose deaths are preventable and learning to identify the symptoms of an overdose can save lives. Here are signs to help you identify if someone is really high or if they are overdosing:

Really High

- Muscles are relaxed
- Head nodding
- Responds to stimulation
- Speech is slowed/slurred
- Sleepy looking

Overdose

- Body is very limp
- Heavy head nodding
- No response to stimulation
- Pale and/or clammy skin
- Death rattle or not breathing
- Blue skin tinge or very pale
- Slow or no pulse

If you come across someone who you suspect is overdosing call 911 immediately. While waiting assess the situation. If you see white substance on

or around the individual wait for help and do not come into contact with the substance as fentanyl can be absorbed through the skin or inhaled.

We come together during the month of August to promote Overdose Awareness Month, increase knowledge about overdose deaths in our communities, and reduce the stigma that surrounds addiction. You can help us spread awareness about this issue by wearing a purple ribbon, sharing information on social media with your contacts, or participating in local overdose awareness events in your area. Together we can save lives.

Written by

Sofia Zubairi

Substance Use Prevention Educator

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, contact the Breaking Free Program at 630.897.1003 for support.



Prevention Highlight

Mutual Ground strongly believes that education is a key element in the prevention of domestic violence, sexual assault, and substance use. Our two prevention education departments provide school-based sexual and domestic violence or substance use prevention programs designed to educate, inform, and empower students.

The Sexual Violence Prevention Education team provides school-based sexual and domestic violence prevention programs designed to educate, inform, and empower students. Through interactive programming participants learn how to recognize, refuse, and report different types of abuse using age-appropriate language. Parent and teacher education programs, crisis intervention, follow up services and linkage to resources are available to all school district partners. Sexual Violence Prevention programs are currently provided in over 100 schools within Kane, Kendall, DuPage and Will counties.

Our Substance Use Prevention Education Department provides programming to educate students on the effects of alcohol and substance use and empower them with the social skills needed to make positive and healthy decisions for themselves. Additionally, our Prevention

Educators work with teens to help them develop leadership skills while working on anti-drug initiatives in their school and throughout the community. Our Substance Use Prevention Education programs serve students in the Aurora and Kaneland communities.

Through the last academic year, our Prevention Educators in both departments worked tirelessly to modify all our prevention programs for virtual presentations. This allowed our Prevention Education Programs to continue to be delivered to students in an eLearning environment. Our Sexual Violence Prevention Educators gave 1,807 virtual presentations and our Substance Use Prevention Educators gave 682 virtual presentations throughout the 2020-2021 school year.



Work in Action

One of our hotline advocates received a call in the middle of the night from a woman asking for services for domestic violence. The caller said that her daughter had recognized the signs of domestic violence when Mutual Ground did a prevention education program at her school. The girl told her mom that what was happening to her was not okay and that there was a place she could call to get help. The girl then gave her mom the pencil that Mutual Ground prevention educators hand out to students which has the Mutual Ground hotline number on it. She called the hotline later that same night.

Volunteer Spotlight

The Yard Sale Revival!

A BIG thank you to all who donated to and volunteered at Miss Fannie's Yard Sale. We raised over \$4,000 at the event to support the mission of Mutual Ground! A special thank you to Miss Fannie herself who put in countless hours of her time to make sure the event went off without a hitch. Mark your calendars for the last weekend in 2022 for next year's event!



Team Work Makes the Dream Work!

We would also like to take a moment to thank the many teams that have come together over the last couple of months to help work on projects together at Mutual Ground. Some of these amazing groups included: Integrated Project Management Company, NICOR Gas, ALE Cares, St. Marks of Aurora Youth and Calvary Church of Naperville Youth.



Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer at the Black and White Ball

One of our favorite volunteer opportunities is at our Annual Gala. Enjoy a fun evening while helping raise money for Mutual Ground. Volunteers will help with check-in, raffles, auctions, and much more! The event is on Friday, October 15 at Hotel Arista in Naperville. To view the available volunteer opportunities for the event visit: www.mutualground.org/black-and-white-ball.

Winter Wonderland Client Shoppe Donors & Volunteer Needs

Each year we are able to bring joy to dozens of families by providing them holiday gifts. Parents and guardians shop for their kids, and kids shop for the special adults in their lives. But in order to make this event a success, we need many donations and volunteers. We will be collecting donations from October through the end of November. This year the event will take place from December 9th – 16th. If you are interested in participating in some way, email ksarrazin@mutualground.org for more information.

For more information on volunteering at Mutual Ground contact our Volunteer Program Administrator, Krystyna Sarrazin, at ksarrazin@mutualground.org.

Our Impact in Fiscal Year 2021

Mutual Ground's mission is to empower individuals, families, and communities to eliminate domestic and sexual violence and the harms of substance use through education, awareness, and life-changing services. Despite the challenges faced by COVID-19, Mutual Ground's doors remained open and we continued to provide life changing services to those impacted by domestic and sexual violence or substance use.



Have you considered leaving a gift to Mutual Ground in your will?

In recent years, donors have informed us of their intention to include a gift to Mutual Ground in their will and we are so grateful to those individuals. These gifts provide an estate tax deduction to the donor and have a tremendous impact on our ability to provide life-changing services that empower individuals to end the cycle of domestic and sexual violence.

Once you have provided for loved ones in your will, you may want to include a gift of money, stock or property to charitable organizations making a difference in your community. A gift to Mutual Ground would be a lasting tribute to your concern for our cause, while guaranteeing our long-term future.

For further information on how to include Mutual Ground in your charitable giving plans, please contact:

Kathy Melone, Advancement Director,
at 630-897-0084 ext. 153 or
kmelone@mutualground.org.

Mutual Ground
418 Oak Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #40
St. Charles, IL



Follow us on social media!

Visit us on the web at
www.mutualground.org
www.breakingtreeinc.org

418 Oak Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506
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Mutual Ground

Give us a call for more
information about
our services

Contact Us

Where the Healing Begins



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