

DA hosts discussion on grief, finding support after overdose death

SHREWSBURY — With a goal to support all families experiencing the loss of a loved one to an overdose, Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. hosted an event last Wednesday focused on grief and how to find support.

The event featured a panel discussion with Deb Dowd-Foley, a long-time peer grief support group facilitator; Cheryl A. Juare, founder and president of Team Sharing, Inc. a parent-support non-profit, and Dennis Bates, CEO of Washburn House.

"Each life lost to overdose creates a void of grief felt by the family, friends, and loved ones left behind," said Early. "We want all those experiencing this grief to



District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr., Washburn House CEO Dennis Bates, Peer Group Facilitator Deb Dowd-Foley, and Sully Roberts, Community Engagement Specialist at Veterans Inc.

know they are not alone, and we want to help them find the support they need through the grieving process."

The panelists discussed their own personal stories of loss and grief, as well as talked through the options for

people to find support locally.

Before forming Team Sharing, Juare talked about grieving the loss of her first son, Corey at the age of 23, to overdose alone for three years before later meeting with a small group of six moth-

ers who had also lost children to addiction.

"I finally realized I am normal. I finally realized I am going to be okay. It was lifechanging," Juare said.

She also said the group rallied for her when she lost her second son, Sean, to overdose 10 years later.

"This community is how I survived the loss," she added.

Dowd-Foley agreed that participating in support groups was what helped her work through her grief after losing her 27-year-old son Brian to an overdose.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of finding the support of people who understand what you are going through," Dowd-Foley said. "There was guilt

and shame that added to the grief...All the whys. Why didn't I hear him come in? Why didn't I save him?"

She said that finding support, whether it be a grief counselor, Facebook groups, or peer support groups, was a huge help in grief. She also advocated for people to practice self-care, including journaling and meditation, and said doing what's right for you is important through the grief process.

"The courage of these parents who come here and say this is what's really going on, I commend them. That is how we're going to end the stigma," said Bates. "The beauty of what we have here is community. The people here who've been hurt the most are also the

ones who can help the most."

Grief support services referenced at the meeting included: Support After a Death by Overdose (SADO.D.), which can be found at sadod.org; The Sun Will Rise Foundation, which can be found at the-sun-will-rise.org; and Team Sharing, Inc., which can be found at teamsharing-inc.org.

Early has been passionately committed to addressing the polysubstance use crisis, as well as trauma and mental health. In 2015, he formed the Central Mass. Opioid Task Force, which he renamed last year the Prevention and Support Network. There are more than 700 members in the network.

Local youth performers to appear in "The Nutcracker" at Hanover Theatre

WORCESTER — Quaboag students Samantha Carr and Violet Atwood, Tantasqua's Eiley Kennedy, Grace Moiles, and Olivia Merrick, West Brookfield's Lilian Benkert and Aspen-Rose Marshall along with Trotter School students McDowell and Schiavo, will take the stage at The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts in "The Nutcracker," generously sponsored by Berkshire Bank, from Nov. 29 – Dec. 1.

Featuring live music from The Hanover Theatre Nutcracker Orchestra conducted by Eric Culver; this production of "The Nutcracker" will enchant you with dazzling lighting and scenery by Broadway designers, brilliant dancing and vibrant costumes.

Tickets are on sale now for Nov. 29 at 2 and 7 p.m.; Nov. 30 at 2 and 7 p.m.; and Dec. 1 at 1 p.m.

"The Nutcracker" is a two-act ballet by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky first performed in Russia in December 1892 and based on the stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Alexandre Dumas. The story revolves around Clara, a young girl who receives a nutcracker doll as a Christmas gift and then enters a fantastical world where the Nutcracker and other characters come to life.

"This is my 16th year as artistic director of 'The Nutcracker' at The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts. I genu-



Bottom row (l to r): Aspen-Rose Marshall, Lilian Benkert, Eiley Kennedy, Samantha Carr. Top row (l to r): Quinn McDowell, Olivia Schiavo.

inely love working with all the dancers to put on a magical performance in front of our central Massachusetts community. I remember auditioning as a little girl for the Boston Ballet and the Pittsburgh Ballet at the Worcester Auditorium. It was a priceless opportunity, and I still think of that time every year we begin rehearsals for 'The Nutcracker' at The Hanover Theatre," shared Jennifer Agbay.

Tickets to "The Nutcracker" range from \$39 to \$59 depending on seat location, performance and availability. Discounts are available for Broadway subscribers. Please contact the box office at 877-571-7469 or visit TheHanoverTheatre.org for more information.

Discounts are also

available for groups of 10 or more. To learn more about group rates call 508-471-1689 or email groupsales@thehanovertheatre.org.

About The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts

Since opening in 2008, The Hanover Theatre has entertained more than two million guests with Broadway musicals, comedy headliners, music, dance and more. POLLSTAR consistently ranks The Hanover Theatre as one of the top theatres in the world. The award-winning historic theatre continues to establish its place as a world-class center for the performing arts, a venue for local cultural and civic organizations and a catalyst for the

revitalization of downtown Worcester. The Hanover Theatre's facilities at 551 Main Street house function spaces, offices and The Hanover Theatre Conservatory.

The Hanover Theatre Conservatory (THTC) provides performance opportunities, classes, and individual instruction in theatre, dance and technical theatre

and design to more than 600 young people and adults from across central Massachusetts each year. Established in 2016, the conservatory cultivates individual attention, ignites creativity and inspires confidence through arts education led by outstanding teaching artists. The state-of-the-art facility includes classrooms, rehearsal and teaching studios, and tech and costume labs for advanced education in stage craft and design. Students receive access to master classes with national touring artists and gain professional experience from performance opportunities with The Hanover Theatre Repertory (THTR) and on The Hanover Theatre's world-class stage. THTC believes in access to arts education for all and provides financial aid for those in

need. Many conservatory students have continued their pursuit of the arts at institutions such as Emerson College, Boston University, NYU, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Berklee College of Music, Hofstra University, Hartt School at the University of Hartford, Marymount Manhattan College, Syracuse University and more.

Worcester Center for Performing Arts is a registered not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, which owns and operates The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts (THTR) and, on behalf of the Worcester Cultural Coalition (WCC), manages Worcester's Brick-Box Theater at the Jean McDonough Arts Center (JMAC). All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

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