



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senators Jen Metzger and James Skoufis Secure \$13,000 for Tri-County Community Partnership to Combat Opioid Crisis in Hudson Valley

JEN METZGER August 8, 2019

| ISSUE: OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION, HOPE NOT HANDCUFFS HUDSON VALLEY, TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



Hudson Valley, NY.....State Senators Jen Metzger (SD-42) and James Skoufis (SD-39) today joined local law enforcement and community stakeholders at the Montgomery Police Department in Orange County where they presented a \$13,000 check to the **Tri-County Community Partnership** to support the coalition's opioid outreach efforts—the result of strong advocacy by the Senators who were able to secure this state funding during the 2019

legislative session.

Communities in the Hudson Valley are at the epicenter of the opioid crisis in New York State, with Ulster, Sullivan, Orange, and Delaware counties all facing rates of opioid deaths that exceed the state average. According to a 2019 report published by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), *New York State - County Opioid Quarterly Report*, there were 106 deaths caused by opioid overdoses in Orange County in 2018 alone--nearly double the statewide average in 2018.

The Tri-County Community Partnership, in collaboration with Families Against Narcotics (FAN), have brought **Hope Not Handcuffs (HNH)** to the Hudson Valley--an initiative, started by FAN in Michigan in 2017, in which specially trained police officers and community members, known as "Angel" volunteers, team up to help people seeking treatment for substance use disorder get the assistance they need. Any person struggling with addiction can walk into a participating police department and ask for help, and an Angel volunteer will be called to the station to help that person find treatment.

Currently, there are 10 Orange County Police Departments participating in the HNH program including: the Town of Wallkill, City of Middletown, Town of Crawford, Town of Montgomery, Village of Maybrook, Village of Walden, Town of Mount Hope, and the Town of Goshen. The Town of New Windsor and City of Port Jervis are expected to launch programs in the near future. Police Departments in Rockland, Dutchess, and Putnam Counties also participate in the program.

Following the announcement, staff from the offices of Senators Metzger and Skoufis joined community members for a Narcan training and information session delivered by the opioid overdose prevention program, **Keep It Moving (K-I-M)**, which educates the public about the

life-saving overdose reversal agent through formal and on-the-spot training.

“This funding will empower community volunteers and local law enforcement participating in the Hope Not Handcuffs Hudson Valley program to continue their work providing life-saving support to individuals who suffer from the disease of addiction,” **said Senator Metzger.** “Ending the opioid epidemic in the Hudson Valley will require a combination of strategies focused on prevention, education, treatment, and recovery, and it will take all of us working together to reverse this devastating trend.”

“Addiction is a disease that no one asks for, and it must be treated as such by our communities, law enforcement, and local government,” **said Senator Skoufis.** “Hope Not Handcuffs has been instrumental in helping rehabilitate those who have suffered in the grips of addiction and I’m proud to deliver this funding that will help propel its program forward. Our work does not stop here--I’m committed to continuing to fight as hard as I can to end this tragic opioid epidemic in our Hudson Valley.”

Annette Kahrs, President of the Tri-County Community Partnership and Program Director of the Hope Not Handcuffs - Hudson Valley program shared, “Over 500 volunteers have signed up to become Angels since January. It’s really an incredible demonstration of human kindness that so many people have come forward to help somebody out, it just shows how far this issue has touched lives. I think we all know someone by this point. We’re so grateful to Senators Skoufis and Metzger for their generous donation and their belief in our program. We will use these resources to reach out to those who are in need and let them know where to find help.”

Laura Beck, Angel Coordinator for the Hope Not Handcuffs - Hudson Valley Program shared, “As a parent that has lost a child to this horrible opioid epidemic, I understand the importance of

having resources available to help fund programs like Hope Not Handcuffs. Grassroots coalitions like the Tri-County Community Partnership have been able to bring our volunteer angels together with our local police departments to truly make a change and offer compassion and kindness to those suffering from addiction. Thank you to Senators Skoufis and Metzger for their generous donations and continued support of our program. This disease does not discriminate and our communities need to fight back together.”

Lauren Mandel, Program Director of the opioid overdose prevention program, Keep It Moving said, “Keep It Moving is honored to partner with Tri-County Coalition and Hope Not Handcuffs by providing Narcan Training for the community. The Opioid Crisis is a non-partisan issue and I am proud that our Senators are taking action to support an organization with proven success.”

Lauren Mandel and Donette Smith, who delivered the community Narcan training at the Montgomery Police Department, created the program in memory of their son, 22-year-old Zane Mandel-Michalak, who lost his life as a result of an accidental fentanyl poisoning in September of 2017, just thirteen weeks after graduating from Siena College School of Social Work.

Detective Sergeant Guy Farina, who is the Montgomery Police Department Liaison for the Hope Not Handcuffs - Hudson Valley Program said, “Police get to engage with and actively be a part of the community while the community actively engage in actual proactive law enforcement. Creating this community-based system of care where we all have a hand in treatment for those with substance use disorder is the point. It is also a proactive non-traditional type of advocacy policing where the police advocate for those in need in the community. It is a way to deal with the root problem of addiction rather than the symptoms of the addiction, which are the crimes that are committed to support the addiction. Simply put: cure the addiction and stop the crime.”

