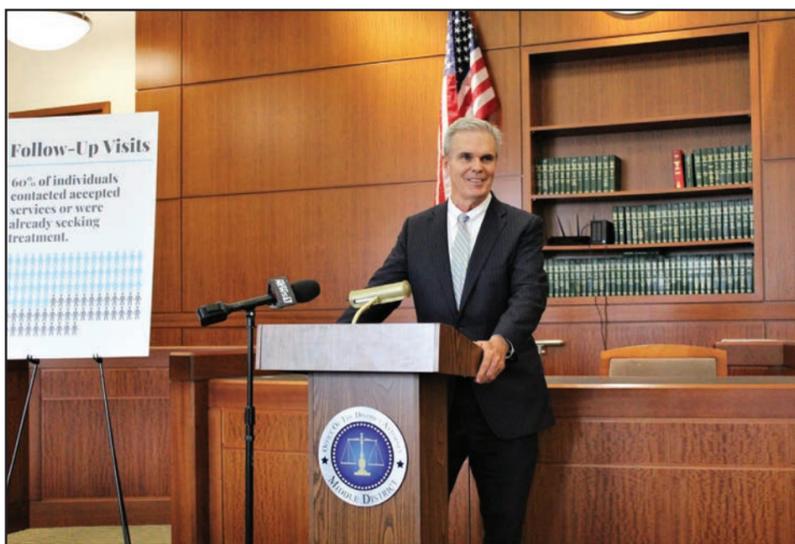


DA continues to support local overdose response efforts



Courtesy

Worcester County District Attorney Joseph Early, Jr., continues to advance a program that is helping to save lives.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — Teaming up with local police departments, Worcester County District Attorney Joseph Early, Jr., continues to provide vital assistance to overdose victims.

Implementing a \$1.2 million federal grant, the DA's office has helped add recovery coaches to an ongoing overdose response program launched in partnership with the county's 60 police departments.

The program, Critical Incident Management System (CIMS), has been used by local police since March 2020. The main priorities of the program are to enable officers to collect overdose

data and respond to non-fatal overdose victims to offer services.

Within 48 hours of an overdose, a plainclothes police officer, often accompanied by a recovery coach, responds to the home of an overdose victim and offers various paths to treatment.

In 2021, the first full year of the CIMS program, 60 percent of officers' follow-up visits resulted in individuals either accepting services or reporting that they were already seeking services.

Even though many local police departments previously had protocols in place for responding to overdoses with recovery coaches, the grant funding implemented by the DA's office has added partnerships with three local

community agencies. This means every police department in the county will now have access to recovery coaches.

"We have seen how valuable recovery coaches are. They often have firsthand experience, which helps them relate to and better guide those who've recently suffered an overdose," DA Early said. "We are so grateful for the continued work of all our police departments and the agencies who agreed to help us support this program by providing access to dedicated recovery coaches. We know this will save lives."

The \$1.2 million in grant funding was awarded to the Worcester County District Attorney's office in November 2020 by the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance.

"It's so important that we continue to expand our ability to respond to overdoses while supporting individuals on their personal journeys to recovery," said Congressman James McGovern, who helped secure the funding. "This investment of \$1.2 million in federal funding will allow the Worcester County District Attorney's office to add recovery coaches with important and unique firsthand experiences to support overdose survivors. This is a major step forward that will help save lives and address the root causes of substance use disorder, and I commend DA Early for securing this critical grant."

While awaiting the release of funds, the DA's office worked to form partnerships with police departments across the county, as well as various community agencies. Partner agencies involved in the recovery coach program include Community Program for Addiction Recovery and Family Continuity.

For local police departments, it's encouraging to join the DA in focusing

on offering resources to individuals in need.

"I am proud to be a part of the effort to get to the root of the problem by offering treatment and providing recovery and support services to those who need it and want help," said Worcester Police Chief Steven Sargent.

The Leicester Police Department has also seen a productive partnership with the DA's office as part of the overdose response project. The LPD reports all non-fatal overdoses to a central CIMS database, with an officer managing the program for the department.

Meanwhile, Uxbridge Police Chief Marc Montminy recently announced a program his department and the Blackstone Valley Opioid Task Force are supporting to provide scholarships to those who wish to become recovery coaches. They hope to support a class of 20-30 new coaches.

"The opioid epidemic has forced law enforcement to challenge the traditional role of police. We've decided to be an entry point into the recovery system instead of the entry point to the criminal justice system," Chief Montminy said.

Local organizations and agencies are also thanked for their support of the program.

"With this new project, we've been welcomed with open arms. It's a very big change in terms of how law enforcement, behavioral health, and substance use providers work together. This program is very unique in that way," said Craig Maxim, the director of behavioral health at Family Continuity, which is providing recovery coaches to 26 communities through the grant.

QCC's Extended Format Police Academy graduates first class

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College's (QCC) Police Academy made history recently when the first class of 12 officers graduated from the Academy's new extended format program. The Academy's new format runs courses during the evenings and on weekends. Graduates from the program are eligible for entry-level hiring into a law enforcement agency, pending a department's specific requirements and standards. According to Academy Deputy Director, Captain Joseph Cecchi, all 12 graduates have already been hired into full-time police officer positions.

During their nine months of training such as humility, compassion, and integrity.

"You are called upon to be a leader and protector in your community and your role can positively change the lives of citizens. Some of the most rewarding parts of being a police officer are being on the front line and making a difference in the lives of others. The Academy program has prepared you well to enter into people's daily lives and can quite literally help you change those lives," Chief Ritacco said.

Class President, Officer Leon Muraguri, reflected on the program and expressed his gratitude for the support from academy staff, family, and friends.

"We, the new generation of police officers, it's our responsibility to

change that public perception, working with the community, and being part of the community. This started here. Since our first training, our Academy has been involved in various community projects such as the QCC HomePlate Food Pantry and Resource Center," he said.

Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC), Director of Training and Delivery, Andrea Nardone, encouraged the new officers to prioritize self-care, rely on friends and family, and look out for their fellow police officers.

"It's very important that you recognize from day one that your mental wellness is the most important thing that you need to take care of, because you can't take care of anything else without that," she said.



Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. was also in attendance to congratulate the new officers. He offered words of advice to the graduates, reminding them to always tell the truth, be good listeners, and treat others with the respect they would like

to receive. He noted that the latter will be especially important when working through the current opioid crisis.

"This wonderful program, it's second to none. Public service is truly a noble profession," he added.

The Academy is authorized by the MPTC, under the direction of Chief Ritacco and Academy Deputy Director, Captain Joseph Cecchi.

To learn more visit QCC's Police Academy.

Summer concert series continues with The Love Dogs

SPENCER — The Spencer Parks and Recreation Commission's summer concert series continues on Sunday, July 17, with a performance from The Love Dogs.

The concert will take place from 2-5 p.m. at Powder Mill Park (located at the corner of Smithville Road and Meadow Road).

The Love Dogs have been on the road for several years, performing everywhere from concert halls to festivals. The band has also released four critically acclaimed CDs.

Spencer's concert series will also include a July 24 performance by The Ed Sullivans. The series will continue every Sunday through August 21.

The concert series is sponsored by Cornerstone Bank.



UPCOMING EVENTS TO CELEBRATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY of East Brookfield

the youngest town in the Commonwealth!

JULY

Monday, July 11
Summer Reading Program
EB Library -
continues for five weeks
The more you read, the more prizes you can win!

Sat. July 23 @ 9:30 am
Historical Talk by
Heather Gablaski:
East Brookfield 100 Years
& Town Town Hall - FREE

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES
July 24: 4EVAFAB (BEATLES TRIBUTE BAND)
Concerts are at 6:00 on Connie Mack Field every Thursday in July and August. Admission is free. Bring a chair or blanket and enjoy the music! Food (pulled pork, hamburgers and hotdogs), drinks and desserts for sale.

See Facebook @EB100th or tinyurl.com/EB100th for details on all events!

Join us this summer!

Help Wanted

General laborer, landscaping, painting, farm work, tree work, fence repairs, light maintenance, no experience needed.

Pay will be based on work history. High school/college students welcome.

Flexible schedule 2-6 days/week.

508-450-8926

PEPIN

WASTE SERVICE

Your Local Roll-Off Specialist

Summer Special

\$325

10 yd. Rental 1 Ton
3 sizes available. Call for pricing.

Roll Off Containers
Weekend Dumpsters for the Homeowner
Houses • Attics • Cellars
Construction Sites

10-15-20 Yd.
508-892-4193 • Leicester, MA
Fully Insured