



Reentry Community News



Reentry Task Force Member Profile Monica Silverthorn-HUDVASH Veteran's Service

While I clearly didn't really understand what a social worker was back then, I decided at a young age that being one was what I wanted to do with my life. I graduated from Rio Grande College in 1984 and stayed in Gallia County Ohio for several years. My first job out of college was that of a home-based teacher for Head Start....I love working with that age group!. Later I spent some time working in an outpatient program in Gallipolis with adults having diagnosis of severe mental illness. From there I became a Children's Services social worker assigned to the Gallia County Children's home (originally Civil War Orphans Home) where I worked for 8.5 years. I worked with younger children who were labeled as "abused or neglected", and children considered unruly or delinquent (who were most often good kids who thought going to school and following the rules just wasn't for them). Occasionally I did have a teenager to work with who had a diagnosis of PTSD or other severe issues often related to past neglect and abuse. My job was to enter and follow them through programs throughout the state when their needs could not be met locally. It was an extremely tough job that I loved and count it as providing me with at least 50% of my "education" as a social worker.

While I remained passionate about the work at Children's Services, in general it is an area known as having a lot of "burnout" and as much as I hate to admit it, I was not immune to it. In 1994 I moved to Athens and I worked for Health Recovery Services doing outreach and education on substance abuse for 2 years. At that time I had an extra gig doing education and counseling part time at SEPTA Center which I enjoyed a lot (and being a locked facility I was careful to never lose my keys which if you know me is saying a lot). From there I became the Ryan White Social Worker for 130 clients in 21 counties, working from the Athens AIDS Task Force. At that time there were medications coming out that had good promise towards making HIV/AIDS a disease that was not an automatic death sentence. My 3 years there were difficult due to the workload but I did enjoy it and definitely learned a lot.

My next stop was at a now defunct agency...PATHWAYS in Logan OH provided outpatient mental health services for older adults having been psychiatrically hospitalized. Later, I was lucky enough to start work with a researcher in the Psychology Dept. at Ohio University doing education and counseling via phone and face to face contact for groups of older adults with HIV/AIDS. It was a pretty innovative way of doing things and I was able to help coordinate several NIH grants worth over a million dollars. The "Lucky" part was that as an employee at OU I was afforded the opportunity to obtain my MSW for almost nothing. While it was difficult to both work full time and be a graduate student for 2 years, I will always be grateful for the opportunity to increase my knowledge and experience. During this time I spent 2 weeks in NY City after 911 providing mental health care as a Red Cross Volunteer....truly a live changing event!

In 2006 I began work as a social worker at the Chillicothe VA covering several group homes that housed Veterans with various needs. While I loved the job and the Veterans I did not like the drive to Chillicothe and when the opportunity arose to start in a new position at the local CBOC (Community Based Outpatient Clinic) providing counseling and case management here in Athens I didn't think twice. In 2009 I made the switch over to the HUD VASH Program here at the VA in Athens.

Working with homeless Veterans is an extremely "challenging" job and to say every day is a new day is an understatement. Working in the CBOC brought me into participating in the local Reentry program. The Reentry meetings have provided me with a lot of contacts for community resources that I may not have had otherwise. Quite a few staff from these agencies have been wonderful additions to our Stand Down program to assist those homeless and at risk for homelessness in our community....I want to thank all of the staff in these agencies for volunteering their time to our 3rd annual Stand Down on October 5thpreliminary stats show that it was a huge success and I look forward to working with you again next year! The Reentry Task Force wants to thank Monica for all of her hard work and dedication as a Social Worker helping those in the community in so many different ways.



Recovery Walk with Athens County Prosecutors Office Keller Blackburn and staff was a big success. There were about 70 to 80 people who participated on the 1.5 mile walk from the Athens County Courthouse to the parking lot behind Hopewell Health Centers. The original idea came from a person in the program , Stacy, who felt that it would be nice to do a public show of support through a recovery walk. The staff at the Prosecutor's office felt that this was a wonderful idea and started planning the event. This was a great opportunity for people to come together and show unity with Vivitrol graduates and participants, community members and local support organizations . The Recovery Walk was like an extension of the Vivitrol graduation that took place the prior week. The Celebrate Recovery Community had a very large showing and wore shirts as well as handed out papers with the slogan + 1 MORE in reference to saving one more life through recovery support. These gatherings help strengthen our communities and decrease stigma.



Phi Alpha Delta, Ohio University's pre-law fraternity , made another generous donation to the Athens Reentry Program on Sept 21st at the Athens Ohio Means Jobs Center in The Plains. They have been very responsive to the needs of the Reentry population and have adopted the Reentry Program as their special community project. Their first donations to the program were in the Spring of 2016. The new Phi Alpha Delta president Amal Afyouni and other key members visited Wal-Mart with the Reentry wish list and delivered back packs, clothing and hygiene items to help people returning to our communities from prison or residential recovery programs. Amal has also talked with me about ways that students involved with the Pre-Law Fraternity can become involved with volunteering in the community as a way to give back and learn about the needs of this area. The Athens Reentry Task Force would like to share our continued gratitude to Phi Alpha Delta for making a difference in our communities. Keep up the great work.

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next task force meeting will be on **November 26th, 2018 at 9:30AM** at the Athens County Job and Family Services Rt 13 main office (13183 St Rt. 13 Millfield, Ohio 45761) in the conference room. See you there!



Additional Athens Community Fall 2018 events



Pictured are members of the Athens Area Stand Down Committee, L-R: Terry St. Peter, Kathy Hecht, Gallia Fuels award sponsor representative - Frank Hall, Tom Smith, Nancy Stotts, Monica Silverthorn, Judge George McCarthy and Crystal Howard. The committee representatives work year round to make the Athens Area Stand Down a success, and their efforts and the excellent community participation did not go unnoticed. The Athens Area Stand Down committee received the Group Hometown Hero Award from the Athens County Red Cross. The committee also received a proclamation from our State of Ohio House of Representatives Jay Edwards and Ryan Smith. The event was held on October 5th at the Athens County Fairgrounds, with 48 service providers present and a total of 295 people served including Veteran's, homeless or at risk of homelessness, and those in poverty. There were 47 confirmed Veteran's, 25 people stating homelessness and many others reaching out for services. Our hat's off and congratulations to the Athens Area Stand Down Committee for another great year. Committee members not pictured, Cindy McFerren, Amy Combs and Lauren Miller.



Pictured Chris Chmiel, Shawn Stover and Bryan Darst at the end of the Athens Prosecutor's Office Recovery walk near Hopewell Health Centers on Sept 29th. A great opportunity to show support and network with other providers. Thanks to Robyn Singleton from Emory University for a great picture and conversation. Let's hope for more future community events.



Becky Filar, Bryan Darst and Shawn Stover at the TEDx talk at Central Venue in Athens on Sept 22nd. There was much discussed about recovery, hope and community. Thanks to Dan Enger, Suzanne Greif and many others for making this event possible. See Tedx StroudsRun for details.