

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE-NEW JERSEY
1675 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Suite 205, Hamilton, NJ 08619

CONTACT: DODIE MURPHY, MSW, LCSW
609/689-0599 x.152
609/291-1412 (home)
dmurphy@ncaddnj.org

Recovery advocacy group formed

A statewide organization to advocate for recovering people and their families has been formed in New Jersey with help from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey.

Friends of Recovery-New Jersey (FOR-NJ) is the name adopted by the group. NCADD-New Jersey embarked on the effort in order to reduce stigma associated with the diseases of alcoholism and drug dependence, to influence public policy, and to advocate on behalf of alcoholics and drug-dependent people and their families.

Individuals in recover, family members, friends and others who support recovery will form the backbone of the new organization, according to Yury Tarnavskyj, public awareness coordinator for NCADD-New Jersey.

The vision statement adopted by the new constituency organizations: To advocate for and make recovery visible, and to overcome the stigma attached to all individuals affected by addiction.

The mission statement reads: "Friends of Recovery-New Jersey seeks to overcome the stigma of addiction, and to honor and celebrate the positive experience of recovery. We are committed to providing opportunities for recovering people, their families, significant others, and friends to empower themselves as a voice for change of society perceptions and public policy. We strive to effect change through: public awareness, education, legislative advocacy and resource allocation.

"Recruitment is a key activity of the fledgling organization as it seeks to attract new members," Tarnavskyj says. Anyone interested in joining should call him at 609/689/0599, ext. 151.

Similar efforts to organize the recovering community are underway in many parts of the country. In the Northeast, recovery organizations, whose key goal is to put a positive face on recovery, have been started in Bucks County, PA, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and parts of New York.

There are two key reasons recovery organizations such as Friends of Recovery-New Jersey are critical to the future of addiction recovery, according to Wayne E.Wirta, executive director of NCADD-New Jersey.

“First, this gives recovering people a voice in policies that deal with the disease of addiction. Both development disabilities and mental health advocates have accomplished much in the area of research and treatment by successfully mobilizing their grass roots constituencies,” Wirta said. “We in the area of addiction have a much greater potential than these other groups – many more individuals are impacted by addiction than mental illness or development disabilities.”

The other purpose, Wirta said, is to put a face on recovery in order to reduce the stigma associated with addiction.

“We’re here to tell the recovering community that this organization exists,” Wirta said. “And we need, even on a modest basis, to plan activities that will begin to impact policies and reduce stigma.”

The tradition of anonymity espoused by 12-step groups pertains to membership in 12-step organizations only.

“The Traditions (of Alcoholics Anonymous) are very clear that one does not break anonymity by simply identifying oneself as being in recovery, which can be done without mention of any particular organization,” Wirta pointed out.