

SAUK VALLEY VOICES OF RECOVERY

NEWSLETTER

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COMMUNITY NEEDS

WHAT IS SVVOR?



The Sauk Valley Voices of Recovery (SVVOR) is a non-profit community group of people that volunteer their time to ensure that those in recovery find the support they need within Lee, Ogle and Whiteside County. Our volunteers are people in recovery, people that have or have had loved ones affected by addiction, and people whose profession is to assist in the recovery process. Through our efforts we hope everyone will find the Sauk Valley as a place where people can embrace recovery. Oftentimes recovery is not nearly as hard when you realize that you don't have to do it alone.

Under the direction of a collective of interested and willing individuals, the SVVOR has committed to work on behalf of recovering people to create opportunities for them, show them good times in a sober lifestyle, and make sure that local institutions such as the courts, hospitals, and social services support peoples' honest efforts to recover.

We are not aligned with any one recovery system or group. We are people that have found our recovery in many different ways. The SVVOR supports 12-Step programs, recovery through spirituality or religion, activity based recovery, therapy, and any other path one may find.

At present, the Sauk Valley is blessed to have government officials and health care systems that see addiction as a disease. They have shown initiative to help people rather than punish them for the problems that stem from active addiction. These stakeholders have been extremely supportive of our efforts and have welcomed our members to join their discussions regarding the battle against the opioid crisis and providing access to treatment. SVVOR's vision is to create and maintain a safe space (building) where people can find the resources, acceptance, and loving support they need to overcome their addiction.

The SVVOR will launch 3 initial programs. Our first will be a monthly sober recreation or education event for anyone interested. This program will aim to show newly clean and sober people that this newfound lifestyle doesn't have to be dull and boring. There will be laughter and adventure. Through these events we hope people can begin to build social networks of positive people as well as reintroduce them to the wonderful things that addiction often robs us of.

Our second program will be the monthly SVVOR Newsletter. It is our hope to create a channel of communication for the recovering community. We want support groups to easily be able to promote their events like pot-lucks and speaker meetings and let as many people as possible know about new meetings. Additionally we want to share success stories of people that have beat their addictions. Our plan is to distribute this free newsletter in print, on-line, and via e-mail.

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RECOVERY 101

HOW TO STAY SOBER OVER THE HOLIDAYS:
9 TIPS FROM PEOPLE IN RECOVERY

It's the season for parties, family dinners, holiday open houses, and 24/7 socializing. It's also the season — from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day — of special challenges for those in recovery from [alcohol or drug addiction](#).

"The holidays are periods of time where we consolidate our past, present, and future lives," says Richard Soper, MD, JD, an addiction medicine specialist and chief medical officer of the [Center for Behavioral Wellness](#). Typically, the holidays involve seeing old friends and family (not all of whom you get along with), and rituals that may have involved drinking or using drugs in the past. It all adds up to potential holiday triggers to go back to old ways. Every holiday season can bring challenges, whether this is your first sober year or your 40th, but the first few years in recovery are often the roughest, experts agree. Here are tips and wisdom on how to get through the holidays feeling cheerful and staying sober, from those who know — Soper and three people in recovery

1. Rewrite Your Recovery Vocabulary- People in recovery often say things like "I have to stay strong," says Soper. But that implies that if you aren't strong, you're weak, so he tries not to use words that stigmatize or imply value judgments. Instead of vowing to stay strong, he recommends, vow to [stay in the present](#), focused on today, or in touch with the goal of your recovery.

2. Stay Connected With People Who Support Your Recovery- This can be your best friend, your neighbor, your coworker, or a family member, says Matt Canuteson, 37, a behavioral health field consultant who has been sober for 13 years. "Around the holidays there are a number of different reasons that it's a dangerous time," he says. "One is that there are a whole bunch of holiday parties." At these events, you'll expect to see people drinking and having a good time. Having a friend with you for support is especially crucial. "Whatever support system is working for you during the

non-holiday time is important to stay connected to during holiday time," says Julie Dostal, PhD, executive director of [LEAF Council on Alcoholism and Addiction](#) who got sober at age 30 and is now 54.

3. Make a List of Holiday Joys That Have Nothing to Do With Drugs or Alcohol- Early in her recovery, Ruth Bowles went to holiday parties and began to focus on non-drinking activities. Now 64, she's been free of alcohol and drugs for 27 years. "I was able to participate in things like baking and decorating the tree," she says. She learned to put herself more in the spirit. "I started focusing in on the joy of a holiday instead of [drinking in excess](#) to the point where it would turn out to be a catastrophe." These days, says Bowles, of Nanuet, New York, her holiday joy list includes baking, trimming the tree, making decorations, enjoying the snow, and "hanging with like-minded people."

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WHAT IS SVVOR? (con't)

Our third program revolves around outreach and advocacy. Our plan is to form a peer support network of recovering individuals to provide help when called upon by the community. This network will work with the local hospitals and treatment facilities. Also, a list of speakers will be developed that can work with schools to educate students about the disease of addiction as well as collaborate with institutions and employers to improve their approach to working with people in recovery. Advocacy will be exercised through SVVOR members serving on local boards and councils where they ensure that decisions about recovery are not made exclusively by people without the life experience of the disease. We will push for changes to policies and services that create barriers for those in recovery. Recovery is a difficult journey and the SVVOR will work diligently to pave the path for those who want to change their life for the better.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



>**NAMI Family Support Groups** provide a place where family members, friends, and significant others caring for a loved one living with a mental health condition can find compassion, learn new ways to manage problems, and access resources. NAMI Family Support Groups are: • Free and no registration is required • Confidential • Held monthly for 90 minutes • Designed to provide support for participants using a structured support group model • Led by NAMI trained facilitators caring for individuals living with a mental health condition themselves.

Meets @ 6:30 on the-

2nd Thursday of each month:
Faith Lutheran Church- 14206 E. Flag Road, Rochelle

4th Tuesday of each month:
St.Johns Lutheran Church- 703 3rd Ave, Sterling

>**Community Peer Support Group Meeting**
Wednesday nights @ 6:30 pm
Town Square Center, Dixon -Top Deck parking

> **Community Celebrate Recovery**
Thursday nights @ 6 pm
Sauk Valley Community Church- 498 IL-2, Dixon

CLEAN AND SOBER FUN



In this section we will highlight a place, event, or attraction in the area that people in recovery can enjoy without feeling unsafe or overly tempted.

Recovery 101 Article (con't)

4. Rethink Your Holiday Obligations- Do you have to go to the office party? Do you have to endure a family dinner with the aunt who triggers your wish to drink or use drugs? "Too many times, people feel obligated to put themselves in situations that may not be good for them," says Canuteson. "The reality is, you are not obligated to do any of those things." You may even feel better about it if you gently explain to your boss or the dinner host why you're skipping this year.

5. Pick Your Events Wisely — and Plan Your Exit- When Dostal goes to a holiday function, she goes with someone who supports her sobriety. For her, this means someone "who would be willing to give me a nudge if I was behaving in a way that was of concern or had the opportunity to become a trigger." She invites a friend who will say to her, "Hey, want to go out and stand on the deck?" when things are turning bad. Or go solo to parties. At least have your own car available so you can leave anytime..

6. Rehearse Your Script to Manage Pushy People- You are bound to be offered a drink or a drug at some point. And when you politely decline, people can push and prod. "You can say, 'I don't drink for health reasons,'" Bowles says. If they still push ("Oh, one won't hurt!") just repeat the sentence, she says. If they persist? "If they continue, I just walk away," she says. You owe no explanation.

7. 'Bookend' Your Support System- Suppose you're headed to your family holiday dinner where

everyone but you will drink too much, but no one is in recovery. "If you attend a support meeting, such as a 12-step, bookend them," Dostal advises. Go to a meeting ahead of the event, tell people there where you're headed and that you'll be back to report in right after the event. If two meetings are logistically impossible, she says, build in the same kind of bookend support with planned telephone calls to a supportive friend.

8. Have an Exit Strategy for Events That May Turn Stressful- "It doesn't hurt to make plans for after the major part of the family activity" if you anticipate that it's going to be stressful, Dostal says. You can tell the host, "I will be there, but I have something else I have to do later." You could also ask a friend to call you at a specific time. Depending on how the event is going, you can tell your dinner companions that a friend needs help and you need to go, or just excuse yourself for a short talk, then rejoin the dinner if it's going well.

9. Address Your Potential Recurrence Triggers Ahead of Time- Holidays have many other triggers that can lead to excess. Perhaps you lost a loved one over the holidays, and you don't feel the same about the season since. Or you may have broken off a relationship close to the holidays, and you're feeling that loss. Talk about that with a trusted loved one. "Being able to share with them" can help. Simply saying, "I lost my mom over Christmas week" may help you cope.

Article adapted from Kathleen Doheny at everydayhealth.com

UPCOMING EVENTS



Each month we will list events - if your group has something planned, please send info to info@svvor.org by the 10th of the month prior to the event.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS - JEFF W.



A SUCCESS STORY. Life is amazing today for many different reasons. Today I'm using my past to shape my future. My past is full of unhealthy choices I've made and consequences that affect me today in my everyday decisions. A life that was full of opportunity as a kid was quickly changed into a life of fear, pain, regret, criminal behavior and broken relationships and time spent that I'll never be able to get back. For over 2 decades I continued to live a lifestyle that was brought on by no other reason except for I liked getting high and was going to continue to do so despite the consequences. I ruined every good thing in my life, every opportunity, every relationship, and spent over 8 years in jails and prisons in the last 22 years. Today I have 14 months clean from all drugs and alcohol. Thanks to a society that has evolved to include more opportunities for help for addicts and alcoholics I've got a whole new perspective on life today and have a sense of accomplishment. I've achieved so much in such a short amount of time because of the help from many different parts of the recovery community. I have learned so much and have changed so much thanks to different programs and meetings and groups it's unbelievable how much my mind has expanded and changed my thoughts and actions today. I'm happy today with myself and my life and without the use of drugs. I never thought that would be possible and today I can truly say that it is possible and I'm truly grateful for the opportunities I've been given to better myself and be an example of what the recovery community can do for somebody that truly wants and needs it. -Jeff W.