

# news

SUMMER/FALL 2016



## Equinox Improves Access to Much-Needed Addiction Services

Making the decision to seek help for an addiction can be tremendously difficult – and fleeting. Given the complex nature of addiction, it is not surprising that appointment “no-shows” are a common occurrence in addiction treatment settings. With providers in Albany – like much of the rest of the country – overwhelmed by the issues and numbers of people needing treatment, no-shows waste valuable treatment time.

Research suggests that one of the leading reasons for no-shows among those struggling with addiction is the waiting time to get in for an appointment.

“Timely access is crucial because many substance users are ambivalent about seeking treatment, have little tolerance for waiting, and will continue to use drugs while on waiting lists,” according to an article in a recent issue of Journal of Drug Issues.

For that reason, the Equinox Counseling Center for chemical dependency, began offering walk-in appointments for assessments two days a week. At first, two or three people showed up each week. But over time, the demand grew and more days with walk-in appointments were added. Today, dozens of people every week are taking advantage of walk-in assessments that are available **Monday and Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

“We used to have a tremendous amount of no shows,” said Michael Ballester, Counseling Center Director. “People often call to set up an appointment when they feel in crisis. But if they have to wait one week, or two weeks to get in, there is too much time for them to change their minds, too much time to keep using, become incarcerated, or to convince themselves they don’t need help.”

“The sooner we can get them in, the greater the likelihood that we can get them the help they need,” he added.

During assessments, counselors gather information from the client and make recommendations for services. The goal is to schedule the next appointment within a week of the assessment.

**Walk-ins  
Welcome.**

“Since we’ve begun offering walk-in assessments, there’s been a huge decrease in the number of no-shows in subsequent appointments. Clients are doing better following through with treatment and we’ve been able to increase the number of people we see,” said Ballester.

“Any time we can remove an obstacle that may prevent a person from participating in treatment, we help move them closer to recovery,” said Ballester. ●

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the CEO	2
Equinox Thanks Its Community Partners!	2-3
Mental Health Program Helps Participants Reach Goals	4
Youth Leaders Help Outreach Center Thrive	5
Be a Mentor – It’s Life Changing!	5
GreatFinds 25 Years	5
Save the Date	6





## CEO's Message



As you read on the front page of this newsletter, improving access to treatment at our Counseling Center for chemical dependency is helping many individuals take the first step toward recovery. I am also pleased to let you know that in early winter, the Counseling Center will be moving from 95 Central Avenue to our location at 500 Central Avenue. This means that the Counseling Center will be in the same building as our Outpatient Mental Health Clinic. Many of our clients struggle with a dual diagnosis of addiction and mental illness. Co-locating these services will not only be more convenient for clients, but will also facilitate coordination between counselors and clinicians, creating a more seamless experience for clients.

Integrating services, such as these, is part of an effort throughout the health care industry to provide more effective and efficient care and to reduce unnecessary use of emergency rooms and preventable hospitalizations. Equinox is committed to this "best practice," which we believe will have significant benefit for our clients.

It's always busy at Equinox, but especially so in the fall. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. As the lead provider of services to domestic violence survivors in Albany County, Equinox will be out in the community working to raise awareness and make sure that people know where to find help. For more information, follow us on facebook.Equinox-Albany.

We are already gearing up for Thanksgiving! Preparation is under way as we set up the hotline and the databases, and everything that needs to be coordinated to ensure thousands of volunteers will help cook, serve or deliver 10,000 meals to our neighbors in need.

But before Thanksgiving, there is the exciting 2nd Annual ThanksGathering Celebration! Please mark your calendars for **Thursday, November 10, 5:30-8:30 p.m.**, and plan to join us at the New York State Museum for an entertaining evening of seasonal beverages, delicious food, live music and more. See you there!

*Dorothy S. Cucinelli*  
Dorothy S. Cucinelli, PhD

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steve Baboulis, *Chair*  
Terri B. Crowley, *Vice Chair*  
Linda MacFarlane, *Treasurer*  
Rose J. Jackson, *Secretary*

Carm Basile  
Brendan J. Cox  
Lorraine D'Aleo  
Dennis First  
M. Sherry Gold  
Gary C. Holle  
Mark R. Holtzman

Dennis McDonald  
David Meyers  
Jill Parsons  
Elliott Rosen  
Lauri Rosmarin-Plattner  
Elmer E. Streeter

Scott Fein, *Counsel to the Board*  
Dorothy S. Cucinelli, PhD, *CEO*

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

Marvin Freedman  
George R. Hearst, III  
Norman I. Massry  
John J. Nigro  
Kevin O'Connor  
Jeffrey Stone



### Erie Materials Builds A Partnership with Equinox

Thank you to Erie Materials-Building Products Solutions for showing how much they care by raising over \$5,500 for Equinox! For the second year in a row, during the month of March, Erie Materials and their valuable vendors donated \$1 to Equinox Domestic Violence Programs for every square of CertainTeed, Mastic and IKO siding and roofing purchased. In addition, Erie Materials customers and employees donated various items including soap, hygiene items, laundry detergent and other necessities for our Domestic Violence Shelter and Programs.

Pictured from left to right: Mike Dominiloski, General Manager, Erie Materials Albany; Christina Rajotte, Equinox Director of Development and Chris Neumann, President, Erie Materials.



### The D'Angelo Team's Dedication Goes Beyond Real Estate

Congratulations to the The D'Angelo Team at Keller Williams Capital District for hosting a successful VIP Customer Appreciation Party on May 18th at The Hollow in Albany to benefit Equinox. A raffle raising \$300 and donations of "wish list" items benefited Equinox's Domestic Violence Shelter and Youth Residential Program. Equinox appreciates the generous support of both the D'Angelo Team and their customers!

# Equinox Thanks Its Community Partners!



## SCCC Students Provide a Personal Touch

Thank you to the students at Schenectady County Community College who collected personal care items and created Welcome Bags for Equinox's Youth Residential Program, which helps homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, to make a successful transition to life on their own. The Welcome Bags included body wash, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste and much more!

Pictured: SCCC student and Project Coordinator Rebecca Bailey, left, and fellow classmate, right. Kate LaFerriere, center, Equinox Annual Giving & Events Coordinator.



## Longtime Equinox Volunteer Receives the Jefferson Award for Public Service

Congratulations to Nancy Virkler, our Thanksgiving Community Dinner Hotline Coordinator, on receiving this distinguished award! Nancy has volunteered at Equinox's Thanksgiving Community Dinner for 20 years and for the past seven years has served as the Hotline Coordinator—responsible for the 3,500 volunteers who cook and deliver 10,000 meals. She also works with nearly 300 community groups and businesses to secure donations of food, products and services. Nancy was among 13 exceptional Capital Region Volunteers who received a 2016 Jefferson Award for Public Service. Recipients were honored at a dinner on April 12th at the Century House in Latham. Locally the annual awards are sponsored by: St. Peter's Health Partners, NewsChannel 13 and the Times Union. Pictured from left to right: Linda MacFarlane, Equinox Board Treasurer, Nancy Virkler and Christina Rajotte, Equinox Director of Development.



## Back to School with CAP COM

CAP COM Federal Credit Union generously donated backpacks full of school supplies to Equinox. Thanks to CAP COM, youth from the Equinox Outreach Center and Transitional Living Program headed to school with the necessary supplies.



## KeyBank Continues to Make A Difference at Equinox

A team of KeyBank employees volunteered their time at the Equinox Garden on May 25th as part of KeyBank's Neighbors Make the Difference Day. They spruced up the garden by weeding and preparing beds for planting vegetables and herbs by our youth at the Equinox Transitional Living Program. Thank you KeyBank!

# Mental Health Program Helps Participants Reach Goals

"I'm a good person, and I deserve good things."

Saying, let alone believing, this about himself would have been unthinkable for John a few years ago. "I was literally dying out there," he remembered. But that was before he entered the Equinox PROS program and found the goal-oriented therapy and support that has helped him gain confidence in his abilities and self-worth.

PROS, or Personalized Recovery Oriented Services, is a comprehensive recovery oriented program for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. The PROS model helps participants improve functioning and independence, and set and achieve goals in areas such as housing, employment and education.

John, who has struggled with both addiction and mental illness for many years, has tried other programs which were somewhat helpful to him, but it has been PROS that is making a significant difference. He not only feels he is getting more out of the program, but, importantly, "I am contributing more to my own rehabilitation."

A Vietnam veteran, John was a heavy machine operator until he was injured. Because of PROS, he is working toward his goals of obtaining a part-time job, living in his own apartment, and getting a car for work and to reconnect with out-of-town family.

"I am doing well and staying on the positive side of my mind. I want to live in today. That's what makes me a stronger person."

John participates in many PROS classes, which are limited to 8-12 participants, allowing a more personalized approach and productive discussions.

*The Living on My Own* class provides participants with skills to successfully live independently and promotes a self-directed lifestyle. Many other classes are offered in areas like goal development, pre-vocational skills, creative therapy, health and wellness, positive relationships and symptom management. John's favorites are computer classes and *Roadmap to Employment*, which focuses



PROS participants proudly display their art project.

on resume writing, how to search for a job and how to prepare for interviews. A vocational specialist helps participants find jobs and advocates for them in the workforce.

In addition to the classes, John is a Peer Guide leader, providing tours to potential and new PROS participants. Through PROS, he has made the important discovery that he is someone peers can turn to for guidance and support.

*"People say I'm not the same person – no I'm not – I would like to live today, and enjoy life. I do that here – I have become stronger."*

"PROS has done wonders for me. In the past, I would not look people in the eye – I felt I would be judged. Now, I have confidence, I look people in the eye when I speak with them; I like being around people and helping them."

Participants are encouraged to explore the resources and opportunities in the community that can help support their recovery, as well as learn how to become a valuable part of the community. Volunteering at organizations like the Food Bank helps participants wrap that experience into the purpose of PROS – learning skills to prepare them for successfully working and living independently.

"While in PROS I have learned a lot and have acquired many real-life skills. I like to say that I have more tools for my life's tool box."

When participants achieve their goals, they can transition out of the program at their own pace. Even after they leave the program, ongoing rehabilitation support and advocacy is available.

"There is no 'discharge' date for PROS participants. Participants have the choice to leave, come back to volunteer or to get services," said Frederick Jones, Program Manager. "They can use these services for as long as they think necessary to reach their goals." ●



Frederick Jones (left), PROS Program Manager, provides encouragement to John, PROS participant.

# Youth Leaders Help Outreach Center Thrive

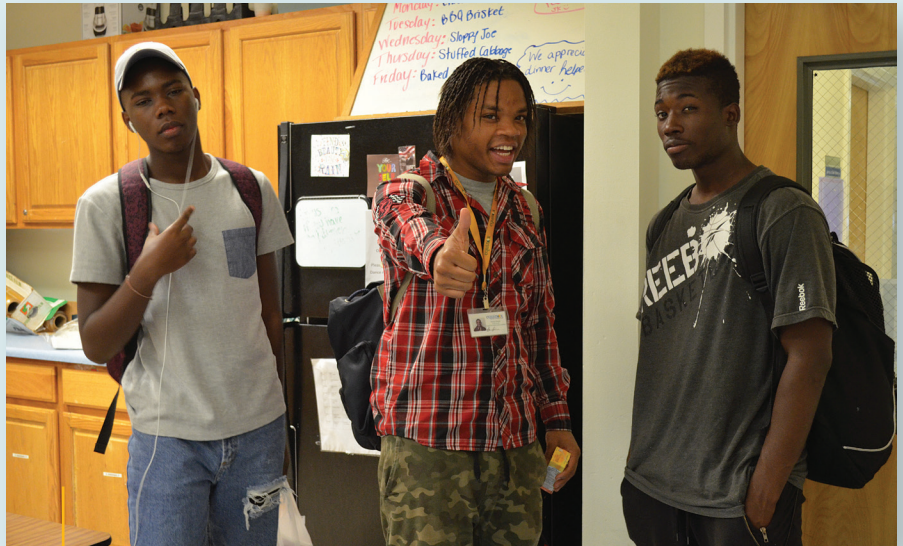
When the Youth Outreach Center (YOC) was awarded a five-year federal grant last year, it enabled the popular after-school Center to develop new programs that promote healthy lifestyles with an emphasis on HIV and substance abuse prevention. This has included expanded hours, new fitness programs and life skills classes and the addition of Youth Leaders.

Youth Leaders, who are trained and receive a small stipend, are YOC participants who are ready – and eager – to take on more of a leadership role. Youth Leaders plan events, like the popular dance cyphers, facilitate discussions and a monthly trivia night – with questions covering a wide range of topics from popular culture to HIV/STI prevention.

“The Youth Leaders have a passion for the program and good leadership skills,” said Colleen Chera, YOC Program Manager. “The kids respond to them, and they are very good at enforcing the rules.”

Damir Rouse has been coming to the YOC for many years. Now, as a Youth Leader, the 20-year-old encourages youth to engage in activities, even when they are shy or too nervous to reach out. Once shy and nervous himself, the YOC gave Damir opportunities to learn new skills that built his confidence. He now recognizes that challenging himself in new ways has brought him new opportunities, and he endeavors to convey the importance of taking on new challenges to his peers.

Every Tuesday he hosts *What’s Up with Damir?*, which has been a great impetus



● Damir (center) is joined by fellow youth leaders, Anthony (left) and Branden (right).

for lively conversation. “I come up with a topic to get the discussion going – anything from politics to music to leadership to bullying,” he explained.

Always willing to help, using his patience, perseverance, and great dance moves, “Damir has grown into a leader who is positively influencing his peers and his community,” said Chera. “In May, Damir was recognized at a Rotary Luncheon for being an outstanding youth. His acceptance speech impressed several of the Rotary members and inspired everyone in attendance.”

“We have wonderful, dedicated staff in the YOC, and the kids are building healthy, positive relationships with them,” said Chera. “And there’s no doubt

that the opportunity for the youth to connect with, and learn from, our outstanding Youth Leaders has had a significant impact.” ●

## GREATFINDS SERVING THE CAPITAL REGION FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS

Through years of changing fashion trends, Equinox’s GreatFinds women’s thrift boutique has been providing a place for our clients to thrive and feel successful – learning retail skills and providing great customer service – and for our customers to find wonderful bargains on beautiful gently used clothing.



**GreatFinds**

**Stop by GreatFinds to check out all the fall merchandise, and take 10% off your purchase with this coupon!**

## BE A MENTOR – IT’S LIFE CHANGING!

Equinox is looking for volunteer mentors to be positive role models for teens (13-18) and young adults (18-24) in our community! Share 6-8 hours of your time each month, September to May, to give young people the support, guidance and inspiration to make a successful transition to adulthood. For more information, please contact Colleen Chera, Youth Outreach Center Manager, at 518-434-6135 or cchera@equinoxinc.org.



Thank you to First Niagara for its generous and continued support of the Equinox Mentoring Program! Kelly Arnold, First Niagara Eastern New York Market Executive (seated, third from right), with Equinox COO Kathy Fletcher, far left standing, and Equinox Development Director Christina Rajotte, far left seated, and the other 2016 Capital Region recipients of First Niagara Mentoring Matters Grants.



95 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
518.434.6135

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Albany, NY  
Permit No. 1026

### STAY CONNECTED!

Visit us at [equinoxinc.org](http://equinoxinc.org) and at [facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany](https://facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany). Or visit us in person. Call (518) 434-6137, ext. 5366 to schedule a tour. We'd love to see you!



Donate online  
[www.equinoxinc.org](http://www.equinoxinc.org)



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK  
at [facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany](https://facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany)

### COMING SOON!

Equinox's online fundraising campaign, **GIVE Thanks**, will launch in October and run until December 31. **GIVE Thanks** is an exciting and easy way to show your support of Equinox and those we serve. Touch thousands of lives at Thanksgiving and all year-round. Check it out at [equinoxgiving.org](http://equinoxgiving.org)

### SAVE THE DATE!



*A Kick-Off to the Annual Thanksgiving Day Community Dinner*

**Thursday, November 10, 2016**  
**5:30–8:30 pm**  
**New York State Museum**  
**(Adirondack Exhibit)**

### Join us in kicking off the holiday season and Equinox's Annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner!

- Live Music by Grand Central Station's Jazz Trio
- Hors d'oeuvres, Chef Stations & Dessert Station with a Harvest Flair by Mazzone Hospitality
- Seasonal Beverage Stations by local craft brewery and vendors
- Cash Bar
- Gift Card Pull (\$20 per pull)
- Celebration Raffle with Great Prizes (\$50 per ticket or 3 for \$100)

*For more information or to request an invitation, contact us at 518-434-6135, x5302 or [development@equinoxinc.org](mailto:development@equinoxinc.org)*