

# **Opioid Addiction: Strategies & Successes**

**Panel Discussion at  
Catholic Charities  
in Monticello**

**APRIL 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm**

## **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**PETER  
VOLKMANN, MSW**

**Chief of Police  
Chatham Police Department  
Columbia County**

*Chief Volkmann has developed  
successful programs in his town  
to combat opioid addiction:*

**“Chatham Cares 4 U”  
&  
“Your Cop”**

*This is a free event and is open to the  
public. Please let us know that you  
are coming: RSVP before 4/20 at  
DWSC4us@gmail.com*

## **Sullivan County Panelists:**

**Hon. Stephan G. Schick**  
*Sullivan County Drug Court Justice  
and  
NYS Supreme Court Justice, 3<sup>rd</sup> JD*

**Sheriff Mike Schiff**  
*Sullivan County’s Sheriff*

**Wendy E. Brown, RN, MS**  
*Sullivan County Public Health Nursing*

**Martin Colavito, CASAC**  
*Director of Prevention & Adolescent  
Services of Catholic Charities*

**Thomas Rue, CASAC, LMHC**  
*Choices Mental Health Counseling*

## **EVENT SPONSORS:**

**New York State  
Democratic Rural Conference**

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*Sullivan Agencies Leading Together*

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Democratic Committee**

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of Sullivan County**

## Opioid Addiction Strategies and Successes

Tom Rue - 4/24/2018

Since August 2010, at Choices Mental Health Counseling we have offered confidential group and individual therapy for mental health and substance abuse relapse prevention, which for people suffering from addiction are inseparable. My wife, Carmen Rue is the office manager and interacts with clients in the waiting room and helps keep the office running.

As a provider of patient-centered trauma-informed care, I do not draw a line down the center of the person to divide mental health issues from recovery issues. From an integrated and holistic point of view, each person is recognized as unique, respecting their inviolable free will and the innate human ability to make healthy decisions and choices.

For those with legal involvements, a court order may be like leading a horse to water. But such mandates are as much a legal fiction as the metaphorical horse who can't be forced to drink. Such "mandates" do not truly exist. People always have a choice. Choices can be easy or hard. A court directive may make it easier to choose life, but it is still a choice. People deserve the respect – and the credit – for making healthy choices.

Addiction to drugs or alcohol is a chronic medical condition. It does not go away. The disease itself is the mandate.

As with asthma, diabetes, hypertension, or other organic conditions of the human body, there are tools and techniques by which addiction can be managed. But if left untreated, it will progress. Its course is predictable. At the end, if its progress is not arrested, it is often fatal. Like someone who has been diagnosed with cancer, the choice is not whether one *will* die, but on improving the odds of *when* and *how* – to live long and well.

This is success. There is every reason to hope. Recovery, which is also progressive, is an option as long as life persists.

"Mandates" are sometimes construed as a form of social control. But free will is a natural law. Natural laws always take precedence over legislation or court orders. Other consequences of addiction can include not just of liberty, but loss of relationships, parental rights, employment, driving privileges, health, or life itself. In a real sense, everyone is mandated, and no one is mandated.

At Choices, we offer support in the form of five therapy groups per week -- two mixed gender relapse prevention groups, a women's group (for women in recovery and also for women with mental health issues), a mental health group for those for whom alcohol and drug abuse issues are not the primary presenting program, and a psychoeducational group (like a class) called Alcohol and Substance Abuse in Society. Urine drug screens and mouth swabs are performed at a certified toxicology lab. At the same time, we strongly encourage active 12-step participation for people in recovery.

I also offer individual therapy for trauma, depression, anxiety, grief, and other issues. I see people all day long. But I believe most strongly in the therapeutic power of group process. Addicts and alcoholics recover best with social support.

As a private practitioner, I am acutely aware that I cannot provide quality mental health care by working in isolation.

At intake, clients are asked to sign consents allowing communication with and between current healthcare providers, past hospitalizations, family contact, courts and court officers, insurance companies, Medicaid transportation providers, and HealthlinkNY. This health information exchange (HealthlinkNY) provides an electronic alerting system if a patient presents at an emergency room or other setting anywhere in the mid-Hudson region.

Coordination of care among healthcare providers is essential to the support of the individual's hope and goals for recovery and to reduce human suffering and improve lives. On Fridays, we fax compliance reports noting attendance to addiction medicine prescribers, psychiatrists, probation, parole, and others who may be helping to keep the person on track. Allied providers are welcome to contact us at any time and are assured of a response.

This epidemic demands a coordinate community response by an extended treatment team and sober support network working together.

**~ WELCOME ~**  
**Opioid Addiction**  
**in**  
**Sullivan County**

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**Strategies**  
**&**  
**Successes**



**Town of Chatham**  
**Police Chief**  
**Peter Volkmann, MSW**

Peter Volkmann, MSW graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Mercy College and received his Master's in Social Work from Fordham University. Peter is a faculty member for the International Critical Incident Stress Fnd. (ICISF) in Ellicott City, MD in which he received the 2017 recipient of the ICISF Lifetime Achievement Award for his accomplishments in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). Because of his vast experience in the different rescue fields and the social work profession, Peter is utilized as a crisis interventionist and trainer for rescue departments, government municipalities, schools, and corporate organizations around the United States who have experienced traumatic events. He assisted in the development of the Uniform Service Program for PTSD at Brattleboro Retreat in Vermont. Peter has been featured as an expert on stress for Dateline (NBC), Discovery Channel, MSNBC, and Law Enforcement Television Network (LETN). Peter developed "Law Enforcement Perspectives Course for CISM Enhancement" which is an approved course of ICISF. He has trained and assisted the startup of numerous critical incident response teams throughout the United States. Peter developed through the University of Albany School of Public Health "ASAP-Active Shooter Action Program" designed for schools, businesses, and communities.

Peter is a retired police officer and emergency medical technician with the Town of Ossining, New York Police Department and previous Director of NYS Zone 14 Law Enforcement Academy. He is now Chief of Police for Chatham, New York Police Department. As Chief, Peter has developed "Chatham Cares 4 U"(CC4U) Initiative in which any person can request help for opioid addiction and a treatment bed will be arranged with transportation ... guaranteed. He considers his greatest law enforcement accomplishment being a first responder on 9-11-01 to the World Trade Center Disaster. Peter is a Member of the Board for Mental Health Association of Columbia-Greene. Peter is also a motivational speaker and has been honored to speak before schools, businesses, federal, state, local EMS and law enforcement personnel as well as military personnel and their families.

## **Hon. Stephan Schick**

Elected in 2012, Judge Schick is a NYS Supreme Court Justice in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District. He is the highest ranking Judge in Sullivan County and one of 15 Justices in the seven county District. He is assigned as the Drug Treatment Court Judge and Vet Track Court Judge. Prior to being elected to the bench, Judge Schick was the Executive Director of the Sullivan Legal Aid Panel working as a criminal defense attorney for 35 years.

## **Sheriff Michael Schiff**

Sheriff Michael A. Schiff began his first term as Sullivan County Sheriff on January 1st, 2006. Since 1988 Schiff has been a veteran of the New York State Police, having served as a K-9 handler and firearms instructor. Sheriff Schiff spent 22 years working as a trooper in the county and the five as a trooper handling security at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan.

## **Martin Colavito, MHS**

Marty Colavito is the Director of Prevention at Catholic Charities, where he has worked since 2007. He holds a Master's Degree in Human Services, a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and is a CASAC. He is also one of the founders of SALT (Sullivan Agencies Leading Together). Marty has 40 years of experience in the field.

## **Wendy Brown, MA, RN**

Wendy Brown is the Deputy Sullivan County Public Health Services Director. She has a Master's Degree in Health Care Administration with experience in the private, not for profit and public sector. Wendy has lectured nationally, co-hosted NYC's "Health Talk Radio" in NYC for 4 years. Wendy was Vice President of Bayshore Community Hospital in New Jersey for 15 years. Wendy also has an undergraduate degree in Police Science, which was her first career.

## **Tom Rue, LMHC, CASAC**

Tom Rue is the owner of Choices Mental Health Counseling, TLLC in Monticello where he provides outpatient direct care to in the form of group and individual therapy to people struggling with addiction and/or mental health issues. Tom also worked at Sullivan County Community Services and at RC Ward ATC in Middletown for many years.

## **PROGRAM**

**Welcome**

**Video Presentation**

**Keynote Speaker:  
Peter Volkmann**

**Panelists Presentations**

**Discussion, Question & Answer**

**Wrap Up**

***Sponsored by:***

***NYS Democratic Rural Conference***

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***Sullivan Co. Democratic Committee***

***Democratic Women of Sullivan Co.***

***Thank you WJFF for recording and broadcasting this event. Special thanks to the Kingfisher Project for attending.***

***Thanks to the Rockefeller Institute of Government from SUNY Albany for attending as well.***