

# Odyssey House *news*

odysseyhousenyc.org

### In this issue:

- Overcoming Obstacles to Achieve their Goals.....Pg. 02
- A Day of Service .....Pg. 02
- Run for Your Life.....Pg. 03
- Finding a Future After Opioid Abuse .....Pg. 06
- What is Family? .....Pg. 06
- Opioid Overdose Reversal Training in the Bronx.....Pg. 07
- What You Need to Know About the Opioid Epidemic..Pg. 07



New York State officials join Odyssey House to celebrate the grand opening of the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery. From left, Maria Vullo, superintendent, NYS Office of Financial Services; Odyssey Foundation Chairman George Rosenfeld and his wife Nancy; NYS Lt. Governor Kathleen Hochul; Dr. Peter Provet, Odyssey House president; Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez, commissioner, Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services; and Durga Vallabhaneni, Odyssey House chief administrative & financial officer.

### Run for Your Life

The 12th annual event celebrates Recovery Month in NYC.

(See page 03)



### “What is Family?” Opens

The Odyssey House Art Project explores the meaning of family.

(See page 06)



## New Initiatives Increase Accessible Treatment Options for New Yorkers

“In New York State, we believe in people. Nobody is a lost cause. Everyone is worth saving.” And with that, NYS Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Hochul officially opened the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery (GRCR) and affirmed the State’s commitment to supporting men, women, and families in need of treatment.

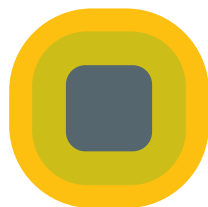
The state officials also recognized the opening of the Recovery Center in the Bronx, a community-based center that promotes long-term recovery through skill building, recreation, wellness education, employment readiness, civic restoration opportunities, and other social activities in a non-clinical setting.

At a press conference and ribbon cutting on September 6th, Lt. Governor Hochul and Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Commissioner Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez, co-chairs of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Heroin & Opioid Task Force, announced new initiatives to combat the opioid epidemic. Maria Vullo, the superintendent of the Office of Financial Services, announced new statewide regulations that will reduce barriers to insurance coverage for addiction treatment.

*“A symbol of endurance and overcoming the odds”*

“This is a building full of hope,” said Lieutenant Governor Hochul at the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery’s ribbon-cutting ceremony. “This is the place that’s going to send out a ray of hope to the rest of the people in our state.”

The 231-bed residential complex opened this year following a major restoration undertaken in partnership with OASAS. The renovation project reclaimed and



**Odyssey House**

Where recovery gets real

# Overcoming Obstacles to Achieve their Goals



**Diploma in hand, Matika is setting her educational goals even higher: “My journey isn’t over.”**

Education has long been a part of the treatment plan at Odyssey House. Our Vocational Rehabilitation Services, in partnership with the New York City Department of Education and Project

Restart, provides on-site educational services available to all residential clients and administers the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) five times a year.

Education opens a lot of doors. But for our clients, who come to us struggling with substance use disorders and a host of additional challenges, earning a high school equivalency diploma is not easy to achieve.

They may come to us following periods of incarceration; some may have learning disabilities; some may be dealing with the threat of losing their children to the foster care system. Others are dealing with mental health issues on top of their substance use disorders; some have not sat in a classroom for years, even decades. All of them have to overcome the effects of years of drug use.

Facing all these challenges, how do they do it? For many of our clients, it is the desire to achieve a goal that has eluded them in adolescence or throughout their adult lives, and the understanding that educational attainment and meaningful work play important roles in helping people achieve lasting recovery.

At this year’s annual commencement ceremony, keynote speaker Whittaker Wright, director of employment and

education at Lantern Community Services, and former Odyssey House Director of Vocational Services, encouraged the graduates to reflect on their journey:

“Take a minute to remember this moment and be proud of it. Then build on your accomplishment, and use this momentum to further your recovery.”

One graduate, Matika E. from the Family Center, spoke about how she is building on her accomplishments.

Matika dropped out of high school when she got pregnant with her first child. Soon after, she took classes and took the GED test twice but failed. Then she gave up. By the time she came to Odyssey House 10 years later, pregnant with her third child, she was ready to try again.

“I have to set the bar for them so they can achieve greatness. They deserve this. *I* deserve this,” she said. Matika is starting classes to become a certified nursing assistant this fall, with a goal to become a registered nurse. “Odyssey House is only a stepping stone. My journey isn’t over.” ●

## A Day of Service



This summer, accounting firm RSM joined forces with Odyssey House for an employee-led service day at the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery (GRCR). The day was a part of their annual Volunteer Day in which they work with select nonprofits across the country as part of their commitment to the communities where they work and live.



On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 42 RSM employees, including senior partners Ian Benjamin and Mike Coppa, teamed up with our accounting department to weed gardens, clean up debris, and paint railings and light posts at the GRCR. RSM also generously donated \$5,000 to cover the cost of the landscaping supplies and support the women, families, and elders in treatment.

“We’re pleased that RSM selected Odyssey House as their NYC charitable partner for this year’s Volunteer Day,” said Odyssey House President Dr. Peter Provet. “It was a great opportunity to strengthen our relationship with them and we look forward to building on that relationship in the future.” ●



# Run for Your Life Shines a Light on Recovery



WPIX reporter James Ford congratulates Margaret McMahon, the women's first place finisher.



The children's races were the highlight of the day.

In the midst of a devastating opioid epidemic, we need more than ever to shine a light on recovery. On September 9, 2017, we brought together present and former clients, staff members, friends and supporters for our signature event, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Run for Your Life 5K Run & Recovery Walk, to do just that.

What started 12 years ago as a modest group of dedicated individuals crossing the finish line to raise awareness and funds for the recovery movement has grown into a family-friendly day of festivities, including children's games and face painting, Zumba, health and wellness booths, and refreshments.

More than 1,000 people came out to Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island to show their support for men and women in treatment for substance use and mental health disorders. The event was emceed by WPIX reporter James Ford, who had a "phenomenal time hosting [Run for Your Life] and raising awareness about addiction recovery."

Also key in making the day a big success were teams of runners and supporters from New York's treatment community, corporate sponsors, and volunteer agencies. John Tavalacci, executive vice president and chief operating officer for Odyssey House, thanked them all their support, particularly our Titanium Sponsor ChemRx for their "steadfast commitment to recovery programs." ●

*Check out our [Flickr](#) and [Instagram](#) pages to see more photos!*

## Why We Run

As a tool for emotional regulation and improving health, activities like running are necessary components for recovery. Proven to reduce symptoms of depression, exercise also helps reduce anxiety and stress.

Other benefits include:

- Reducing cravings for unhealthy substances and behaviors
- Increasing discipline for routine
- Enhancing self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Learning to set goals and overcome adversity

## A Play About Addiction Gives Back to Residents in Treatment



This summer, The Barrow Group Theater (TBG) in midtown Manhattan debuted an original comedy, "The Hungry Ghosts," and donated proceeds from ticket sales to the men, women, and families in treatment at Odyssey House. Scheduled to run for two nights only, the play was extended due to the positive response. By the end of its run, the production raised \$1,000 for Odyssey House.

Set in a posh Malibu rehab facility, "The Hungry Ghosts" is a one-act comedic play that tackles the issues of existential anguish, the nationwide opioid epidemic, and the power of human connection with unlikely allies. This dynamic production featured a cast of TBG alumni and was commissioned by emerging playwright Tessa Borbridge.

In presenting the donation, director Rachel Casparian said, "It gave us all such satisfaction to know that this show was not only helping to bring about greater awareness of the complex nature of addiction and recovery, but also that through this financial contribution to your organization, we would be able to contribute to the recovery of those most directly affected." ●



# New Residential Center Supports Family Health and

*(Continued from page 1)*

enhanced the original historic structure, built in 1915 as a hospital for psychiatric patients, to create a modern family treatment center for women, parents with young children, and adults 55 years of age and older.

“The story of this 100-year-old building is one of realizing potential, learning from the past, and creating a new place of sanctuary and healing,” said Odyssey House President Dr. Peter Provet. “Its story, like those of the people who come here for help with substance abuse and related problems, is also a symbol of endurance and overcoming the odds.”

The GRCR is named in honor of George Rosenfeld, who for more than two decades has helped lead – and shape – Odyssey House. His visionary and compassionate public service leadership as Chairman of Odyssey House (2002-2012) and then as Chairman of Odyssey Foundation has helped save the lives of thousands of vulnerable men, women, and children suffering from substance abuse and mental health disorders.

### ***Bridging gaps in community services***

Also announced at the press conference was \$300,000 in funding to Odyssey House and two other providers to establish the Family Support Navigator program in New York City and on Long Island. Family Support Navigators help families struggling with substance use disorders understand the progression of addiction and how to navigate insurance and treatment systems. Odyssey House received \$100,000 to establish the program in New York City. New Horizons Counseling Center and Family and Children’s Association each received \$100,000 to open programs on Long Island.

Slated to begin in 2018 out of the Outpatient Services clinic in the Bronx, the Family Support Navigator will develop individualized service plans in consideration of the family’s holistic physical and behavioral health care needs to bridge the gaps in community services. The Navigator will also conduct community outreach in local organizations and schools to provide education about treatment services and opioid overdose rescue trainings. ●



**Members of the Odyssey House Boards of Trustees show their support for George Rosenfeld (center). From left, Dwain Carryl, Grant Miller, George Suttles, and Konstantin Richter.**



**OASAS Commissioner Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez speaks to ElderCare resident Michael J. about his artwork.**



**Maria Vullo, superintendent, NYS Office of Financial Services, sits down with children from the Family Center in their playroom.**

# Recovery with a Diverse Range of Treatment Services

## In Their Own Words...

*Amy, a 29-year-old mother in treatment with her daughter, and Alfred, a 61-year-old ElderCare client, share their experiences at Odyssey House.*

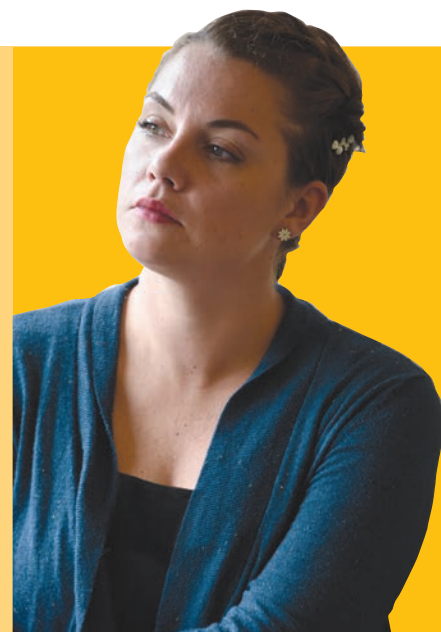
"I am the mother of a beautiful 1-year-old girl. I am here to rebuild my life for both of us.

At 22, I didn't see my life being taken down by a medication that was supposed to help me. I had just graduated from an excellent college with a degree in psychology and sociology. My future was ahead of me, and it looked bright.

Soon after I graduated college, while I was recovering from surgery, I was given opiates to manage the pain. What happened next was so fast I didn't see it coming – soon I was dependent on opioids for more than just physical pain – they had become my emotional support. I was addicted.

Within a few short painful years, I started using heroin. Heroin took over my life completely. Everything I did, every day, was to support my growing habit. Eventually, this led to an arrest and I was sitting in jail in full withdrawal. I was fortunate that my family was still willing to help me get treatment – and I needed it more than ever as I soon found out I was pregnant.

I am grateful to Odyssey House and its program for women with children. It is saving my life and giving us a future. For the first time in a long time, I am incredibly hopeful and that is because of this program."



**"I am here to rebuild my life" — Amy**



"Thanks to Odyssey House, I have the tools I need to live a successful life in recovery. My counselors challenged my thinking patterns and helped me see that I was using drugs to avoid the pain of confronting the damage I've done, to myself and to others, through my behaviors and actions. I have new coping skills – there will be bumps in the road, but now I know how to overcome them, and not use them as an excuse to use drugs again.

Being in treatment with people my own age made a big difference. Sitting in groups, talking to my peers, I realized that even

though we come from different places, we all have the same underlying problem. Addiction is isolating – it makes you feel like you're the only one going through this, especially at my age – but it was here I realized I was not alone.

For far too long, I took life for granted. I'll never do that again. You don't get too many opportunities at my age, and because of the ElderCare program, I'm ready and able to make the most of this one. Odyssey House will always be a part of me. Thank you for restoring color, and sobriety, to my life."

**"It was here I realized I was not alone" — Alfred**

**GET REAL ABOUT RECOVERY**

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, call us at **866-888-7880**. We can help. Beds are available immediately.



# Finding a Future After Opioid Abuse, a Young Father Works on Getting his Life Back



Joe works on a painting for the “What is Family?” exhibit.

*The Odyssey House Art Project is comprised of men and women in treatment for substance use and mental health disorders. In a city where 1,374 died from drug overdoses in 2016 – and someone dies from an overdose every seven hours – these services are more critical than ever. Here is one young man’s story.*

When he was prescribed Percocet for a football injury, Joe could not have guessed

how it would alter the trajectory of his life. At 19, he had a stable job with a promising career path as an electrician. Five years later, he had a full-blown heroin addiction, lost his job, and most of his friends.

Growing up in Brooklyn, Joe was close with his mother. It was after her death, following a decade-long struggle with heart problems and kidney cancer, that he turned from prescription drugs to heroin. “I couldn’t stand to watch her suffer,” he says.

Slowly, the rest of his life started to unravel. His friends began to keep their distance. He stopped showing up to work on time and was fired. But he and his girlfriend continued their heroin use even after learning she was pregnant, believing the withdrawal effects would result in a miscarriage. As a result, his

son was born with opioids in his system and was weaned on morphine until he was six weeks old. It was the wakeup call Joe needed. He decided to get clean and to focus his future on being a role model for his child. “My son is my first priority. Everything I do is for him.”

With his girlfriend and son in another treatment program, two months ago Joe checked into detox and then into Odyssey House. He is committed to being in recovery and knows this is the best chance he has to save his life and build a better one for his new family.

When he finishes treatment, Joe’s goals are to study for his electrical license and raise his son in a healthy, sober home. He knows reaching these goals depends on his recovery, and is determined to rise to the challenge. ●

## Artists ask “What is Family?”

For their ninth exhibition, the Odyssey House Art Project explored the structures and dynamics of how people define family. For many of our residents, families include not only parents and siblings but also friends, teachers, their peers in recovery – people they rely on for connection and mutual support.

Odyssey House has an active and vibrant expressive arts program. Creating art helps residents find new ways to access feelings and a new medium to express these feelings. Many residents, who were socially and culturally isolated by their addiction and mental illness, are encouraged to become engaged in the creative process. ●

*“What is Family?” is open to the public at the Haven Art Gallery, located at 239 E. 121st Street, New York, NY 10035. Please call (917) 492-2582 to schedule a viewing. Photos of the artwork can be viewed at [flickr.com/odysseyhouse](https://www.flickr.com/photos/odysseyhouse).*



NYS Senator Brian Benjamin (center, pictured with Janice Slaughter, Director of Mental Health & Housing Services, and artist Jack C.) stopped by the opening reception to show his support.



Young artists at work at the GRCR.



Bridget Brennan, NYC Special Narcotics Prosecutor, with Odyssey House CFO Durga Vallabhaneni at the opening reception.

## What You Need to Know About the Opioid Epidemic

- Drug overdoses are the leading cause of death for Americans under 50, causing more deaths than gun violence and car crashes combined.
- Most overdose deaths involve an opioid, such as prescription painkillers or heroin.
- New York City has been particularly hard hit by the opioid epidemic, with a record 1,374 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2016.

### Naloxone saves lives

Naloxone (brand name: Narcan) is a medication that reverses overdoses from opioids such as heroin and prescription painkillers.

- 150 overdose rescue kits are available throughout our programs
- 260 staff and 1,000 clients are trained overdose responders



**Every 7 hours, someone dies of a drug overdose in New York City**

### How you can help save a life

Interested in learning how to use naloxone to save a life? We offer free training sessions on opioid overdose prevention. Learn how to recognize an overdose, what to do during an overdose, how to provide rescue breathing during an overdose, and how to administer naloxone. Contact our training department at [info@odysseyhousenyc.org](mailto:info@odysseyhousenyc.org) for details.

## Recovery Center Brings Lifesaving Overdose Reversal Training to The Bronx



**Recovery Center Coach Lorenzo Brooks gives a community member an overdose rescue kit after a training session.**

On August 31<sup>st</sup>, as part of International Opioid Overdose Awareness Day, our Recovery Community and Outreach Center (RCOC) held free overdose reversal

training for community members in the Bronx. The RCOC staff instructed more than two dozen people in how to recognize an opioid overdose and administer naloxone to reverse it.

There is a pressing need for overdose reversal education in the Bronx, which had the second highest rate – and the largest overall number (308) – of overdose deaths in New York City in 2016. Given this need and the success of Overdose Day, the RCOC has been offering training on a drop-in basis ever since. To date, nearly 100 Bronxites have learned how to save a life by reversing an overdose.

The training is a key part of the Recovery Center's mission of focusing on prevention and increasing awareness about substance abuse. Paul Smith, Coordinator of Recovery Services, said, "We want to take these lifesaving tools directly to the public. Opioid addiction affects everyone, and the more education and destigmatization that occurs, the more we as a community can address the crisis." ●

## Senior Manager Wins Leadership Award



**The Odyssey House clinical management team joins Mary Callahan (center) to celebrate her award.**

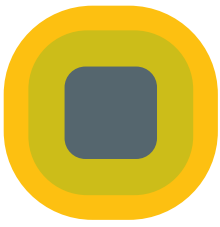
Mary Callahan, Senior Manager, Director of Outpatient Services at Odyssey House, was honored as the recipient of the 2017 Eileen Pencer Women's Leadership Award at the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Provider of NYS (ASAP) Annual Conference. The award recognizes women who have positively influenced the substance abuse field and who inspire and motivate other women through their personal, community, and professional lives.

Ms. Callahan was chosen based upon her role and success as a leader, role model and mentor to other women, community volunteer, her commitment to advancing the field of recovery and her sensitivity to diversity in the field of addictions.

In nominating Ms. Callahan, Jeff Savoy, Vice President, Director of Clinical Support Services recognized her "engaging and supportive leadership, which creates an environment of psychological safety and encourages growth for both staff and service recipients."

Ms. Callahan's commitment to the recovery field is exemplified through her work with Mercy College to develop classroom curricula focusing on the recovery support movement, to provide education and engender interest among aspiring human services professionals. She is also engaged as a liaison with several NYC colleges where she mentors newly licensed social workers in the field of addictions to ensure a competent, well-trained future workforce. ●





# Odyssey House

Where recovery gets real

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To provide comprehensive and innovative services to the broadest range of metro New York's population who:

- Abuse drugs
- Abuse alcohol
- Suffer from mental illness

To provide high quality, holistic treatment impacting all major life spheres: psychological, physical, social, family, educational and spiritual.

To support personal rehabilitation, renewal and family restoration.

In all of its activities, Odyssey House undertakes to act as a responsible employer and member of the community, and manage the assets of the organization in a professional manner.