



PRO-A Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance
900 S Arlington Ave, Suite 254A
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PRO-A Unite To Face Addiction summary report

The Pennsylvania Recovery Organization first learned of the Unite to Face Addiction Rally in the Spring 2015. There was a mention of the event in an article about uniting the recovery community of the United States for a historic event in Washington DC sometime in the Fall. The focus of this historic event to reduce stigma and elevate our national awareness about addiction and that 23 million Americans are in long term recovery from the disease of addiction and closely align with our agency mission.

We looked for and found the Unite web site, making contact with the Executive Director of Faces and Voices and began to consider ways to mobilize the Pennsylvania community. Activity to mobilize the community developed momentum throughout the early summer after we published the article about the event in our Spring 2015 newsletter and began to work closely with Unite Organizer Rich Alexander to identify key groups and individuals for him to contact. We recommended that he reach out to Secretary Tennis of DDAP and Deb Beck of DASPOP to let the state organizations know about the event and to Deb Beck of the treatment community to mobilize them.

In June and July, we coordinated meetings and phone contacts between Mr. Alexander and several RCOs, including the Bethlehem Recovery Center, Message Carriers and Sages Army and others. We set up several phone calls to discuss strategies to mobilize PA RCOs with Mr. Alexander throughout July and August. We used social media heavily to communicate information about the event, and also began to send out email blasts to the recovery community. We communicated information about the rally, including its significance and the logistics of attending including the use of rally bus by volunteering to be a bus captain and organize buses in communities across the state. We sent out a total of 54 emails including "blast" emails to groups and individualized emails to key organizations and people. We also used these opportunities to showcase statewide recovery events and to strengthen and promote efforts of RCOs and groups across Pennsylvania who were planning Recovery Month events in September.

In August we contacted DDAP and received permission to have Mr. Alexander present information to the Advisory Council about the Unite event and to answer questions that people may have. He presented to the PA Advisory Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse on August 12th. Unite set up regular phone conferences throughout the summer and between these calls and multiple direct calls with Mr. Alexander, other groups to involve were identified and coordinate with. PRO-A hosted a conference call with PACDAA and Unite on August 17th, where we shared information about recovery events in September and to orient them to the Unite event and provide information about how to get involved.

Our program coordinator worked in late August and through September to assist persons in locating buses and filling buses, with an emphasis on the Central PA region. Mr. Stauffer worked with a number of groups, including most notably the Bethlehem Recovery Center - a new RCO who were able to raise \$9,000 for four buses. The Bethlehem Recovery Center sent the third largest group in the nation to the Unite event of any of the 700 community partners that Unite identified across the country. The largest group was a local RCO to the DC metro area and the other was the national group, Faces and Voices Of Recovery. More than 200 people from the Lehigh Valley made the 400 mile round trip ride to participate in the event which was the largest group from the state of PA and was initiated through our work with them.



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As the event drew closer, we used our newsletter to announce the event headliners and provided information about the event at a number of recovery month events around the state, and regularly discussed it at other meetings and events we participated in. We used our social media to get information out about Rally Bus and provide updates from Unite about the event layout for persons making the trip. As Hurricane Joaquin tracked towards DC, we were in close communications with the Unite Organizers and used social media to relay information from the organizers. Unite leaders were working with the National Park service to determine if the event would be canceled and within the final 72 hours to communicate that the event was set to occur despite the cancelation of 18 major events in the DC Metro Area as a result of the Hurricane, which we communicated out as quickly as it came in.

On the Day of the event, we met RASE Project, The Bethlehem Recovery Center and Message Carriers as well as other advocates, recovering persons and family members from all across Pennsylvania. We met up with Secretary Tennis and he had his picture taken with RASE Project and BRC among others. We had a live feed of the event broadcast on our Web Site set up that streamed the entire event in HD to persons who could not attend. We set up a Twitter account and posted information on the event every 30 Minutes or so. The event was a huge success and Pennsylvania was given accolades from the organizers for all the help we provided in mobilizing for the event this was noted by such persons as Tom Hill, Pat Taylor, Rich Alexander and Secretary Tennis. Leaders within SAMHSA including Marsha Baker and Jean Bennett were made aware of the success of the mobilization effort.

We also began in early September to work with Capital Decisions, a DC organization run by Carol McDaid to assist with the October 5th Hill day. This work included multiple calls, emails and conference calls. We were asked to be the coordinating liaison for the advocates coming from Pennsylvania for the day, which we did. We discussed various concerns about the unmet service need and all the legislative staff we met asked questions about the opiate crisis and the unprecedented overdose rate that has occurred over the last few years. We also discussed our concerns with the IMD exclusion.

Following the event, PRO-A updated its web site with pictures of the event and we carried the Unite Challenge to make something historic happen in our own communities. We have asked groups to post pictures, stories and what they intend next to Twitter using the hashtag #PARECOVERS and carried the same message through our Face Book feed. We have started talking to an RCO who has the objective to be the first in the state to meet the challenge and we are working with them to set up a collaborative effort in NE Pa with interested SCA, RCOs and community groups.

We believe that this was a great opportunity to show how we could assist and support in the coordination of a major event such as the Unite to Face Addiction event. We are proud to have been a part of this historic event to unite our communities and change the conversation about addiction and recovery.

Respectfully submitted,

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