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UtahStateUniversity



HEALTH EXTENSION
Advocacy. Research. Teaching.



HEART Initiative

January 2023 - December 2023

extension.usu.edu/heart



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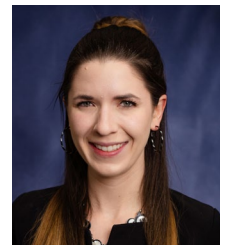
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Lea Palmer



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Valentina Sireech



Kari Ure



Maren Voss



Sadie Wilde



Ashley Yaughter

Special thanks to those not pictured, including USU Extension interns, staff, and faculty involved in Substance Use Prevention efforts across the state!

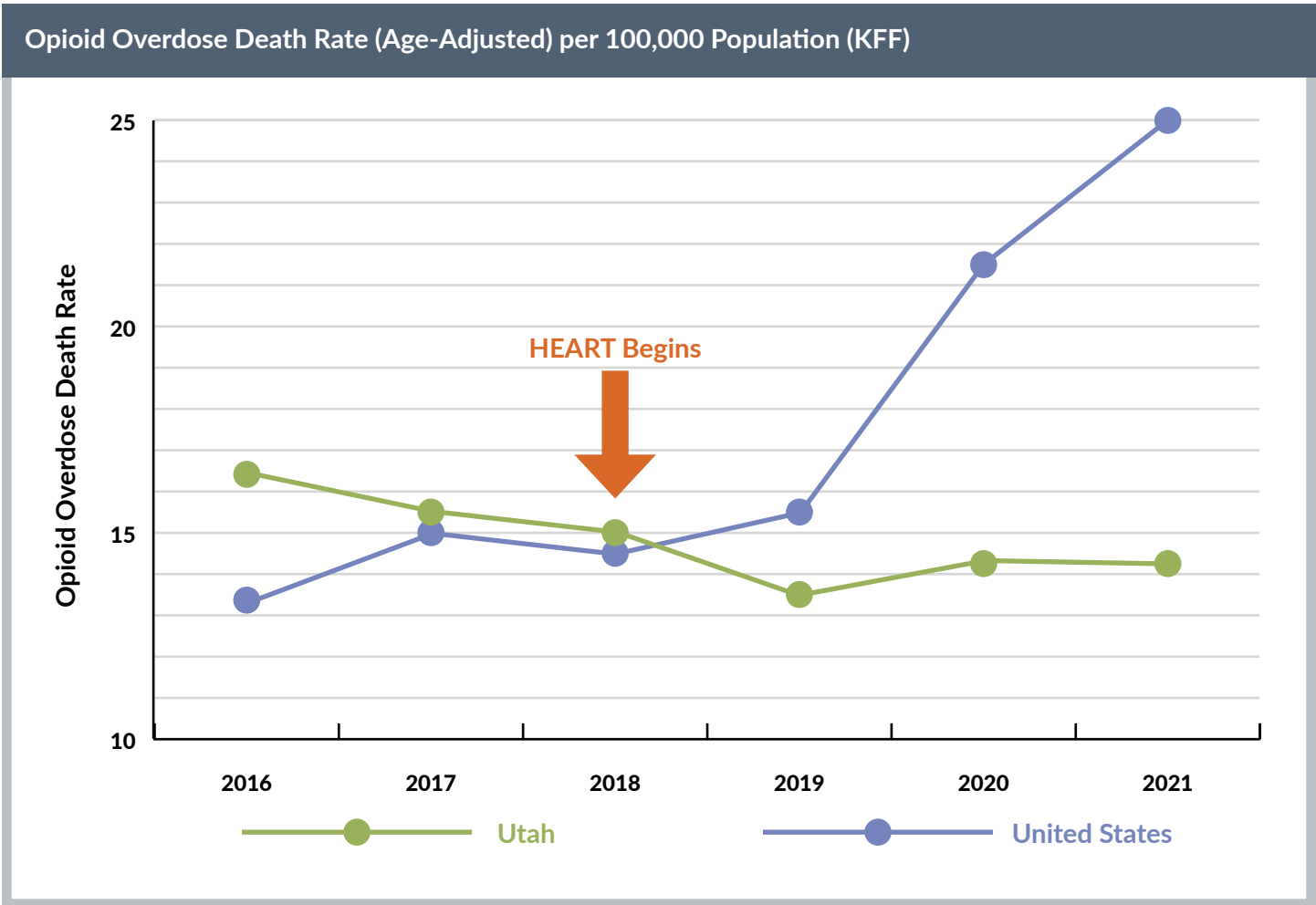
extension.usu.edu/heart/directory

The Opioid Overdose Epidemic in Utah

In 2017, the state of Utah was ranked third in the nation for prescription opioid-involved deaths (Scholl et al., 2018). USU Extension’s HEART Initiative was formed in 2018 to address the state’s health and wellness needs, primarily the opioid overdose crisis (Yaugher et al., 2020). The opioid overdose death rate from 2015-2019 for the state was 22 per 100,000 population ages 15-64 (Yaugher et al., 2022). The detrimental impacts of the opioid overdose epidemic require the prioritization and direction of resources to address the problem in each community.

Data from UDHHS suggest collaborative efforts are having positive effects in the state, but there is still work to be done. UDHHS reported a decrease in the state opioid overdose death rate among 15-64-year-olds for the years 2019-2021 at 19.1 per 100,000 population (IBIS, 2023a). However, they report that 11 Utahns still die each week due to substance overdose, seven (70%) of which are attributed to opioids. Of those seven, four deaths (38%) are due to prescription opioids and two are due to fentanyl (IBIS, 2023b).

Overdose deaths are “a preventable public health problem; [yet] they are the leading cause of injury death in Utah; outpacing deaths due to firearms, falls, and motor vehicle crashes.” (IBIS, 2023a)



Utah and United States data was retrieved February 28, 2024, from the Kaiser Family Foundation, the independent source for health policy research, polling and news website: [Opioid Overdose Death Rates pr 100,000 Population](#)

What is the HEART Initiative?

In July 2018, Utah State University Extension implemented a cutting-edge program with a multidisciplinary five faculty team focused on health and wellness, to specifically address the opioid overdose epidemic in counties with high need. Due to early successes, in late 2021 the HEART Initiative expanded to include all interested faculty at USU Extension to recognize their substance use prevention efforts and bolster positive impacts in additional communities. Five Core HEART faculty continue to serve as experts to help direct the initiative and support Extension faculty working with their communities to address substance use prevention needs.

What Do We Do?

HEART brings unique evidence-based academic resources into the community, partnering locally and nationally to address the opioid overdose epidemic and other pressing public health issues. Additionally, HEART focuses on related health and wellness topics, including suicide prevention, substance use prevention, mental and emotional health education, stigma reduction, resilience building, and other topics depending on identified local needs. HEART partners with health departments, research experts, community coalitions, and other key stakeholders to coordinate on-the-ground efforts that advance evidence-based information, community-based solutions, and multi-sector partnerships.

Over Six Years of Successful Programming

Over almost 6 years, HEART has secured over \$12 million in grant funding through key efforts and collaboration. In 2023 alone, HEART received 6 grants with over \$500,000 in funds throughout the state for programming in communities with high need. HEART worked with over 244 partners in 2023 on many impactful efforts, including: local coalitions, the 2023 Rural Opioid & Stimulant Wellness Summit, Ride Utah for military veterans and personnel, A Light to Remember/International Overdose Awareness Day remembrance luminary ceremonies, Be Epic Escape the Vape, and many more!



Shawna Carroll, Be Epic Coordinator for Emery County, supporting local National Takeback Day event in October 2023

"There are many factors that contribute to the widespread problem of [substance] use disorder, and there are many steps we can take to help. We need to continue learning, working together toward solutions, and offering support to those who struggle."

-2023 Rural Opioid & Stimulant Wellness Summit Participant



A Peer-Support panel at the 2023 Rural Opioid and Stimulant Wellness Summit in Price, UT

HEART'S Four Objectives



Prevention and Education



- Supporting education in schools in partnership with evidence-based programming.
- Collaborating on suicide prevention and education.
- Supporting drug-take back and safe use of prescription medication programs.
- Example: **Be Epic, Escape the Vape Program**



Stigma Reduction and Harm Reduction



- Collecting storytelling and narratives from persons in recovery, individuals actively using substances, and family members to change views on stereotypes and reduce stigma.
- Providing education to individuals, groups, the public, and key stakeholders. Supporting suicide prevention, education, and coping related to opioid and substance use.
- Providing education, information, and harm reduction skills to communities (e.g., supporting naloxone use and awareness, etc.).
- Providing stigma and harm reduction education to first responders to improve their ability to provide care to people with substance use and mental health disorders
- Training Certified Peer Support Specialists with lived experience to assist people with substance use disorders
- Examples: Bi-Annual Prescription Take Back Day Events; Naloxone Trainings; Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Awareness Community Events



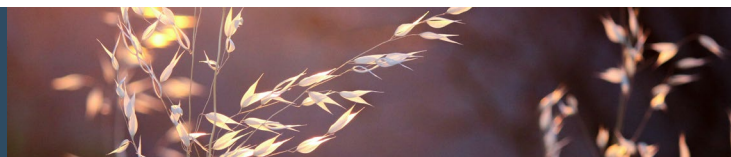
Strengthening Community Ties



- Connecting, establishing, and supporting coalition partnerships
- Engaging key stakeholders and community collaborators to ensure the community voice guides all HEART outputs and projects.
- Employing service mapping to address gaps in service provision and fostering community accessibility
- Examples: The Carbon & Emery Opioid & Substance Use Coalition; the Tooele Opioid Response Network; Box Elder Safe Community Coalition



Resilience Building



- Partnering to build emotional and physical resilience through strength-based programming, engendering a greater capacity to deal with struggles.
- Promoting and strengthening resilience through evidence-based practice.
- Examples: Living Well Self-Management Programs; PEACE (Pain Education and Community Empathy) Education and Support Groups

Statewide Program Highlights



Participants at the Equine Activity which was part of the 2023 Rural Opioid & Stimulant Wellness Summit

2023 Rural Opioid & Stimulant Wellness Summit

The 2023 Rural Opioid & Stimulant Wellness Summit brought an enlightened understanding of rural communities strengths in our connectedness and willingness to take on new challenges to form new pathways. Over the course of the pre-conference and two-day summit participants heard from 31 speakers and had 10 wellness activity presenters. Presentations included harm reduction concepts, stories of recovery, farm stress, stimulant use disorder, the opioid overdose crisis, an Acudetox demonstration, and a hands-on equine services demonstration. Panels of medical providers and patients as well as individuals in long-term recovery spoke about the importance of recovery and peer support. Wellness breaks and networking opportunities assisted in creating connection among presenters, community members, and providers during the daily Health & Wellness Resource Fair. Together we built a readiness to address new and emerging rural wellness issues. Connected, we will face the opioid overdose crisis and emerging stimulant crisis. Learn more at extension.usu.edu/communitywellness/opioid-summit

"The information was diverse but on topic. Great topics and presenters. Lots of hard work paid off for a successful conference."
-Summit Participant

200+ attendees **180** Wound Care Kits created

Ride Utah!

Ride Utah! Equine Extension Program provides mental health benefits through experiencing nature and interactions with horses across the state. Ride Utah! is a program where USU Extension takes participants, primarily military personnel, and their guest, on a 2-hour recreational trail ride, feed them an authentic western meal, and close with a voluntary group discussion about issues they are currently facing, moderated by a licensed professional. Ride Utah! has evolved over time to now includes riders from all aspects of relationships, including parent and child, significant others, as well as focusing on group activities. Ride Utah! has recently expanded from military personnel participation only to now including several different types of participants experiencing PTSD and/or anxiety and depression. Learn more: at extension.usu.edu/equine/ride-utah



Ride Utah! participants on a Horseback Ride in Utah.

27 instructions (events, trainings, etc.) **271** participants

Be Epic, Escape the Vape

2022-2023 marked the 3rd year of the Be Epic, Escape the Vape e-cigarette prevention program for youth in rural communities in Southeast Utah. Be Epic was designed to help reduce tobacco use and prevent vaping initiation among youth in rural Southeast Utah, specifically Carbon, Emery, and Grand counties which have elevated youth levels of e-cigarette use. Using a multicomponent intervention approach, Be Epic provides parent, teacher, and youth vape prevention education, and social media campaign focused on debunking myths surrounding e-cigarette use. The objective of each of these components is to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors in youth to prevent initial use of e-cigarette products. Learn more at extension.usu.edu/be-epic



Josie Hatch, Be Epic Coordinator for Carbon County, teaching at a local Be Epic, Escape the Vape Event

Be Epic has been able to train
teachers at
21/23
schools in our area making our impact
on youth countless.

- Parent education and teacher trainings were statistically significant pre- post-intervention in most areas.
- 9 teachers trained on vape prevention curriculum (CATCH).
- 22 youth engaged in afterschool youth programming.
- 54 parents/guardians attended prevention education events.
- 51 parents/guardians and youth participated in Active Parenting of Teens, parent-child dyad workshop series.
- 45 CATCH My Breath prevention posters given to schools.
- 179,808 individuals reached on social media.

A Light to Remember: International Overdose Awareness Day

from Logan to St. George, holding live events sharing the message of hope, support, and healing. Through multiple community partnerships, there were hundreds of people in attendance and lives impacted by luminary remembrance celebrations for those lost to overdose. In addition, Naloxone trainings for temporary emergency overdose reversal occurred, resources were available, and communities came together for support. Learn more at alighttoremember.life

10 Utah locations

>1,600 people attended an in-person event.



"Strong Hearts stay
forever regardless of
when they leave us"
- A Light to Remember
Participant

- 156 Remember At Home kits were delivered
- 600+ individuals completed free naloxone trainings.
- 418 free Narcan kits were given to community members.

2023 A Light to Remember:
International Overdose Awareness
Event for Carbon and Emery
Counties, at Huntington State Park

The William A. Burnard (W.A.B.) Warming Center in Cache County

The W.A.B. Warming Center was assisted by a USU Extension Faculty member with providing services to the unhoused in Cache County. The W.A.B. Warming Center strengthened our county by providing safety, warmth, and care for unhoused individuals and families on the coldest nights of the year in St. John's Episcopal Church of Logan. All provided by an all-volunteer group that came together to assist the unhoused community members or "Guests" that needed Temporary overnight refuge from freezing temperatures. Access to water, snacks, cold weather clothing, and information about community programs and resources was provided.

From Dec 9, 2022, to March 31, 2023. The WAB Warming Center provided the following impacts:

- 100 Unique Guests Served - An estimated 200 people in Cache and Box Elder counties were unhoused during the 2022 Point In Time Count
- 11 Days - Average Length of Stay for Guests
- 118 trained Volunteers Participated in the first year, Volunteers received education and training to respond to mental or physical health emergencies (including Narcan for opioid overdose)
- 4,750 + Volunteer Hours were provided. \$142,500 in approximate monetary value
- 6 USU affiliated volunteers (faculty and students) – Provided their expertise

"There are endless amounts of positive experiences. The relationships I developed have been unmeasurable, including relationships with volunteers, guests, board members and community support. The guests have been very appreciative of this resource, and have verbally mentioned their gratefulness. The camaraderie has been nothing like I have ever experienced."
- W.A.B. Participant

"I served on many shifts with different volunteers. All of them are incredible, but Tim Keady goes above and beyond and is the epitome of calmness. He made me feel welcomed, empowered, and capable to do my work as a volunteer."
- W.A.B. Participant

~ **\$45,000**
of Donations allowed the Center to
open and provide services

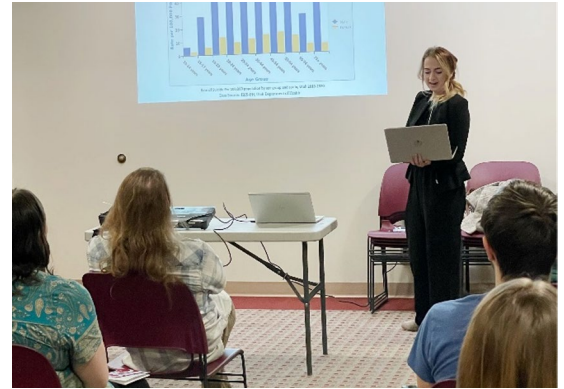
1,118
Nights of Shelter
provided



WAB Warming Center Board Members Krystina Hall and Tim Keady received a \$15,000 grant from the Utah Association of Realtors and the Cache Valley Association of Realtors represented by Chelsea Funk.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Class

QPR is an evidence-based course developed and researched by the QPR Institute, with a mission to “reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training.” USU Extension has partnered with the Davis County Health Department and the Weber Communities that Care Coalition to provide these trainings in both Weber and Davis County. These classes have been hosted by local libraries, community event centers, the USU Kaysville Campus, and by request for employees at local businesses. As of March 2024, we have trained over 277 residents on suicide prevention tips and available resources in Utah using the QPR Suicide Prevention curriculum.



Sadie Wilde, HEART Faculty, provides QPR Training

“I have had lots of suicides that have affected my life and I think it’s helpful for the stigma to be lifted.”
- QPR Training Participant







Improved pre-post knowledge about how to talk about and refer for a suicide crisis

HEART’S Online Presence

Social Media

HEART shares news, upcoming events, happenings in the community, and helpful health and wellness information related to the HEART team via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These social media pages were created at the end of March 2019, and HEART maintains a strong presence on each platform. A YouTube playlist was added in 2021 which features HEART Bunch videos and other educational content about a variety of HEART-related topics. Through these platforms, HEART hopes to engage with the community in a positive way and contribute helpful insights and resources.

	TWITTER USUHeart @usuHEART		INSTAGRAM USU Extension HEART @usuextension_heart
	FACEBOOK USU Extension - HEART @usuHEART		YOUTUBE USU HEART @USUHEART

	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	FACEBOOK
REACH	28	2,615	65,211
NEW PAGE LIKES	3	81	63
POST ENGAGEMENTS	1,780	8,896	2,905
TOTAL	102	574	581

Social Media Post Examples

Substance Use Disorder impacts the whole family and family members may need support and treatment too.

FIND SUPPORT

USARA'S Community Reinforcement and Family Training:
 myusara.com/support/craft
 SAMHSA: samhsa.gov/find-help
 National Association for Caregivers:
 caregiving.org/advocacy/peer-support

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Gaffman, 1963, Lander et al., 2013, Lipari & Van Horn, 2017, McCann & Lubman, 2018, NAC, 2016, Roosen et al., 2010

BE EPIC ESCAPE the VAPE

KIDS WHO FEEL VALUED

ARE LESS LIKELY TO USE SUBSTANCES LIKE E-CIGARETTES

STATE | Extension UtahStateUniversity

State of Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. (2021). 2021 Student Health and Risk Prevention. Prevention Needs Assessment Survey. https://dsamh-training.utah.gov/_documents/SHARPreports/2021/FourCornersDistrictLSAAPProfileReport.pdf



Scan here to watch a **Heart Bunch** video on YouTube.

Heart Beat Newsletter

The HEART Beat

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Average total opens: 193
 Average total clicks: 24
 Current subscribers: 328

The monthly HEART Beat Newsletter promotes health and wellness, focusing on the opioid overdose epidemic and emphasizes community awareness of resources, events, and emerging issues. Visit mailchi.mp/a035986dadf6/usuheartnewsletter or scan the QR code above to subscribe!

Website

UtahStateUniversity | HEART Extension

Impacts News Community Events Resources Research Directory SIGN UP

HEART

What is the HEART Initiative?

The Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, and Teaching Initiative, also known as HEART is a new pilot initiative through Utah State University Extension. This cutting-edge, 4-year pilot program is aligned with National Cooperative Extension's recently instituted essential focus area in health and wellness. HEART serves as a model of how Extension can join community partners to better address the health and wellness needs in our state. HEART brings unique academic resources into the community, partnering locally and nationally to address the opioid epidemic and other pressing public health issues.

Follow Us

Quick Links

- Contact Us
- Impacts
- News

Stigma Reduction and Harm Reduction | Strengthening Community Ties | Prevention and Education | Resilience Building

The HEART website provides resources and information to the communities in which we serve. The website includes relevant information that promotes health and wellness and shares the impacts of the HEART initiative, news, upcoming events, community engagement opportunities, current research, and additional resources supporting the opioid overdose epidemic and other pressing public health issues. Learn more at extension.usu.edu/heart

2023 Quick Facts



58

Total Publications
Authored



39

Scholarly
Presentations Offered



15

Total Awards
Received



\$503,800
in Grant Funding
Acquired



244

Collaborative
Partners



21

Virtual
Programs
Taught



180

In-Person
Programs
Taught



201

Total
Programs
Taught



327

Lessons
Taught



992

Naloxone
Kits
Distributed



265

Youth Completed
Mental Health
Screenings

15 Substance Use-Related Program & Individual Awards, Including:

- 2023 Catherine Summerhays Distinguished Service Award (HEART Initiative), Utah Society of Public Health Educators (USOPHE)
- 2023 Patrick J. Fleming Award - Community Organization (HEART Initiative), Utah Office of Substance Use & Mental Health
- 2023 1st Place: Innovative Program Team Award (Be Epic, Escape the Vape), Utah Extension Association of Family & Consumer Science (UEAFCS)
- 2023 Best of State Award: Community Education (Be Epic, Escape the Vape Program)



USU Extension won four Best of State Awards in 2023, including: “Nutritional Health Education” for the [Create Better Health \(SNAP-Ed\) program](#); “Finance Education” for the [Personal Finance Education Program](#); “Community Education” for the [Be Epic Escape the Vape Program](#); and “Curriculum Development” for [The Confidence Project](#).

Note: The accomplishments and totals listed are conservative numbers reflected by the six HEART Initiative Faculty who contributed data to this reporting period. Impacts of the expanded HEART Initiative continue to grow and will be reflected throughout Utah in the communities in which we serve.

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