



MERCER COUNTY
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION, INC.

8406 SHARON-MERCER ROAD, MERCER, PA 16138

Please contact us at: 724-662-1550

Or visit our website at:
www.mercercountybhc.org

MERRY CHRISTMAS
and
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



The BHC Bulletin

ISSUE 24
DECEMBER
2017

Note from our CEO:

Mary Ann Daniels

Holiday seasons are supposed to be filled with merriment, cheer and wonderful family moments—at least that is the picture we hope to paint and the story we hope unfolds for all.

Unfortunately, this is not the picture every person arrives home to each evening—if they do have a home. Please remember in your plans for giving this year that there are a variety of organizations helping individuals who are truly less fortunate. If you have the capacity to give time or a donation, consider organizations and churches who could use a little boost to help the people they serve: homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, foster care agencies, food pantries—just to name a few.

Not everyone has the capacity to donate time or monies or other resources—and that is okay. My holiday wish for this community is that you share something of your own good fortune. And that may be something as simple as a smile or a kind word. Giving to others does not have to be something that comes wrapped in a pretty red bow. And you never know when that smile might brighten someone's spirits enough to help them move through the rest of their day.

Thanks everyone – hope your holidays are filled with whatever magic you need.

BHC Central Intake: 724-662-2230
Crisis: 724-662-2227



Our Mission:

The Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission is a non-profit organization that assists individuals and families experiencing substance abuse, or mental illness, or developmental challenges through the administration, coordination, and delivery of a service system committed to promoting recovery and improving the quality of life of those served.





Soon we will be hearing people wishing each other happy holidays. But for many, it will be anything but happy. The holidays always bring a special challenge to those in mourning. Whether it is the Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, or Christmas, each special day reminds us of time we shared with our loved one and the things we used to do together. Waves of memories can overwhelm us. We begin to worry and dread the upcoming events. We wonder if we are going to survive and how we will manage. Many times the anticipation is worse than the realization, and other times it can be just as bad as or worse than we anticipated. What is needed is a way to cope and come through the experience in one piece.

You might find the following suggestions helpful:

Be kind to yourself. This is perhaps the most important thing you can do. Don't take on more than you can handle. Give yourself permission to feel whatever you are feeling. You don't have to put on a "happy face" for others.

Ask for and accept help. After a loss, it can be a challenge balancing being with others or being alone. During the holidays, it is important for you to let others know what you need. You may feel as though you are a burden to others, but people want to help you although they often do not know how. The same applies for your emotional needs. Others may feel uncomfortable talking with you about your grief. Just let them know if you want to talk about what you are going through or just want a shoulder to cry on.

Allow yourself to find some enjoyment. When we are in the throes of grief, it is almost impossible to think that we will ever find joy in our life again. We also may feel that we are somehow dishonoring the memory of our loved one by enjoying ourselves. The truth is that we all need laughter in our life. It can be very healing. Try to allow yourself some pleasure in the season.

Do what you need to do to get through the day. Some people decide to keep the same customs for each holiday while others decide to make changes. For some, it is easier to be in a different environment and might leave town during the holiday. Others may decide to forgo their own celebration in order to be of service to others such as delivering holiday dinners to the needy or somehow helping those who are alone and forgotten. Whatever you do decide to do, make it easy on yourself.

For additional information go to:
www.psychologytoday.com

STRESS, DEPRESSION AND THE HOLIDAYS: TIPS FOR COPING



The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.

Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

Stick to a budget. Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

For additional information go to:
www.mayoclinic.org

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) CORNER

Computer Fraud Alert: Protecting Yourself from Scams

Telephone technical support scams are an ongoing threat to technology companies such as DELL, HP, Microsoft, Apple and consumers. Scammers might call you on the phone and pose as representatives from a technical or customer support organization. In most cases, scammers mask their originating phone number (Caller ID spoofing) so the calls appear to be from a genuine support contact number.

The scammers attempt to gain your trust, and they might employ one or more of the following tactics:

- Try to convince you that your device requires urgent technical support, and then request payment information (such as credit card, debit card, or online gift card) to bill you for phony services.
- Request you to call them back at another time to "complete" a fraudulent technical support case and potentially further the scam.
- Request remote access to your device, or try to convince you to install software that enables remote access to the device.
- Try to trick you into installing malicious software including malware, viruses, or spyware that could capture or jeopardize the security of your personal information, such as online user names or passwords.
- Request you to provide confidential information such as user IDs, passwords, customer support case numbers, or account history.

Become aggressive and demand that you follow their instructions.

Protect yourself from telephone tech support scammers

Computer companies **never** contact customers to provide unsolicited technical support. If you receive an unexpected call claiming to be from one, you should hang up.

- Do not rely on caller ID alone to authenticate the caller, as criminals can change the caller ID display to make it appear as though the call is coming from a legitimate support number.
- Do not provide any confidential information such as user IDs, passwords, social security numbers, credit/debit card numbers, PINs, or account information.
- Do not transfer funds or agree to make payment in the form of online gift cards.
- Do not give callers remote access to your computer or device.

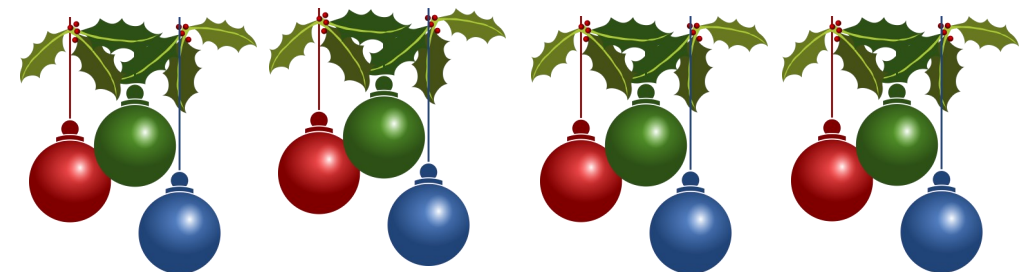
Do not install any software suggested by the caller.

What to do after you have been contacted by a scammer

If you believe you have been contacted by a scammer and are concerned about the security of your device and personal information, take the following actions:

- Change the password for your device and all accounts where you might keep personal information, such as email and financial accounts.
- Run a security scan or contact your security software provider to determine whether malware has been installed on your device.

Write down all details related to the scam call, and report this information to the [Federal Trade Commission](http://www.ftc.gov).



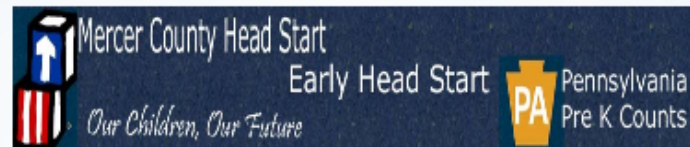
Submitted by: Gregg Buchanan

Prevention Department

'Tis the Season for Environmental Changes Tobacco Initiative: Great American Smoke out (GASO)



MCBHC
GASO educational materials
Quit Kits and a "cold turkey"
drawing to participants who
pledged to be tobacco free.
(90+ Employees)



MC HEAD START
NHPA Tobacco Control Program
(TCP) provided Lunch and Learn
to staff regarding Cessations
Classes and PA Free Quitline.
(10 participants)



SHARON REGIONAL HOSPITAL
Revision of Tobacco Policy
reinforcing a tobacco free
campus.
(1800 employees)



MERCER COUNTY HOUSING
AUTHORITY
100% smoke free indoors and
within 25 feet of entrances as of
January 1, 2018.
(1000+ residents)



COMMUNITY COUNSELING
CENTER
Updated Tobacco policy.
Provided Health and Wellness
Fair for clients, families and
employees.
(75 participants)



REYNOLDS VFW
100% Tobacco/Vape free
as of November 1, 2017.
(450 members)



RIVERVIEW MANOR
100% Smoke free indoors and
within 25 feet of entrances as of
November 1, 2017.
(120 residents)



Mercer County CYS Independent Living (IL) Youth
Tobacco litter clean up project,
"Give Back by Cleaning Up" in Buhl Park.
(13 youth participants)



AUTOSOFT
Implementing Tobacco and Vape
Free policies campus wide as of
January 1, 2018.
(200 employees)

ADDITIONAL GASO Partners

Lawrence County Human
Services Center

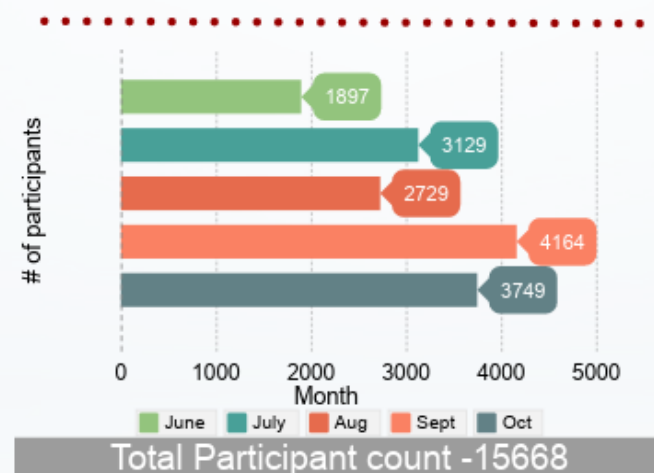
Lawrence County
Housing Authority

SCI Mercer

Grove City Medical Center

UPMC Jameson

Snapshot:
BHC
Prevention
Department
Participant
Count -
2017 Fiscal
Year



Why Drug and Alcohol Use Increases During Holidays

According to statistics provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the number of alcohol-related fatal traffic collisions per day is significantly higher during the holiday season. The car accident death rate experiences a significant spike in the period between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. During that week, 40% of fatal crashes are ones in which either of the drivers is alcohol-impaired, compared with 28% throughout the remainder of December. These figures reflect a larger trend during the holiday season. Beginning around Thanksgiving, many people notice a significant increase in the consumption and abuse of alcohol and drugs, along with the consequences they bring such as DUI accidents, domestic violence incidents and even suicide. Why should this be? Is there any reason why people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol more during the holidays?



Holiday Festivities and Gatherings

Perhaps the first reason that drug and alcohol consumption increases during the winter holidays is the fact that there is more to go around. From office parties to gatherings at friends' houses to family feasts, there is often an abundance of wine, liquor and beer made freely available to the party guests. Alcoholics will often use this—and the fact that others around them are drinking—to indulge in their habit. Along with the ready availability of spirits, there may be drugs at certain parties, with the result that people who don't normally take drugs will do so and those who already have an addiction will feel more comfortable using them among others.

Another aspect of the holiday festivities is the pressure that they often cause. For many, the holidays bring a unique combination of joy and stress. While we may be delighted to visit with certain family members, the thought of seeing others makes us cringe. To make matters worse, people often find themselves struggling to handle the stress and anxiety of finding the perfect Christmas present, planning the perfect meal and sharing the perfect moments with loved ones—expectations which are often difficult to fulfill and frequently lead to friction or letdown.

The Downward Spiral of Substance Abuse

Most of us have various ways of dealing with these stresses, but some turn to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with their problems and find a way to avoid confronting the situation. This is, unfortunately, a losing proposition. Part of the operation of drugs and alcohol in the body is to deplete the natural reserves and throw the body's chemistry out of balance, with the result that the user is physiologically less capable of standing up to a stressful situation and is, therefore, more likely to resort to further substance abuse.

Avoiding Holiday Drug and Alcohol Abuse

While the most effective solution to alcohol and drug abuse during the holidays and year-round is to seek help through a rehabilitation program, there are short-term solutions to help you or a loved one make it through the upcoming holidays safely:

- Avoid parties where you know that drugs or alcohol will be available
- Bring your own non-alcoholic beverages to a party
- Bring food, and don't worry about overeating—it's healthier to gain a few pounds than to abuse drugs or alcohol
- Find someone you can talk to about your problems
- Bring a friend or family member you can count on for support at a party
- Make plans in advance for leaving a party when you start to feel pressured to drink or take drugs, such as by having a convenient excuse for why you have to go
- Avoid situations which you know will cause you stress

Perhaps the best strategy for making it safely through the season is to focus on doing the things you enjoy and visiting with those you love, which is, after all, the purpose of the holidays.





Fa-la-la-la-ugh! The holiday season is a stressful time of year for most people. For those who are working to quit smoking, the holidays can be especially challenging.

Share and practice these tips to help manage holiday stress:

1) Get Enough Rest

When we're tired and run down, cravings to smoke will seem stronger while we feel less able to manage them. [Get enough sleep at night](#) and take a power nap during the day if you can.

2) Reduce Caffeine

Many of us reach for a cup of coffee when we need an energy boost, but too much caffeine can leave us feeling jittery and stressed. [Avoid extra cups of coffee](#) to stay awake. Rest if you're tired.

3) Drink Your Water

Not only is water a great craving-buster, it's an essential ingredient in a healthy diet. [Keep yourself well-hydrated](#) and you'll feel better in general, which will in turn help you manage holiday stress more easily.

4) Eat a Well-Balanced Diet

Enjoy holiday treats, but be sure to give your body the fuel it needs to function properly. Eating a [well-balanced diet](#) rich in fruits, vegetables, protein, and complex carbohydrates will help keep you at your best, both physically and mentally.

5) Go for a Walk

[Walking](#) reduces stress and improves circulation. It also releases endorphins, the "feel good" hormone. So, when the urge to smoke strikes, head out for a quick walk around the block.

You'll come back refreshed and relaxed. If the weather is bad, use the treadmill or take a walk at an indoor mall.

6) Breathe!

[Deep breathing](#) is a quick way to reduce stress. Breathe in through your nose for a count of three and exhale through your mouth for a count of three. Repeat this for a few minutes, and the tension in your body will begin to fall away.

7) Schedule Time for Yourself

While you're running around taking care of holiday tasks, be sure to [schedule a little me time](#) daily. Take a hot bath or spend a half hour in a quiet corner with a good book (or both). Choose activities that replenish your energy and renew your spirit. Avoid a piling on of stress and you'll find it easier to manage your holidays without reaching for a cigarette.

8) Have a Cup of Tea

It only takes a few minutes with a cup of tea and honey to feel the stress of the day begin to slip away. Choose herbal teas rather than those with caffeine. It's a quick and easy way to rejuvenate yourself.

9) Focus on Today

Use a [daily list](#) to help you organize tasks. Don't overwhelm yourself by looking at the whole picture: Keep things simple and in the present moments of the day you have in front of you. You'll be more efficient and less stressed.

10) Don't Strive for Perfection

We are often our own worst critics. You're working hard to quit smoking, so give yourself permission to [loosen your expectations](#) a little for this holiday season. In other words, don't try to do it all. Think instead in terms of what is good enough rather than stressing over every detail.

11) Take a Mini Mental Vacation

[Meditation](#) is another great tool.

Close your eyes and create a place in your mind that you can visualize when you need to slow down and relax. Return to the same imaginary location every time so that it becomes familiar and comfortable. As you settle in, focus on your breathing, and slow it down gradually. Breathe deeply in and out for three to five minutes.

12) Delegate

Enlist the help of others to complete holiday tasks. Involve family members and friends; they're usually happy to help if asked.

13) Minimize and Simplify

It's so easy to take too much on this time of year. Make a list of things you'd like to accomplish and prioritize them.

Decide what things must be done, and what things could be let go if need be. Sometimes [less is more!](#)

14) Avoid Financial Stress

Don't threaten your [sobriety](#) with worries about money. Make a holiday budget and stick to it.

15) Remember Why You Quit Smoking

Don't lose sight of the bigger picture during the holiday season. The [reasons you quit smoking](#) are as valid today as they were the day you quit. Take five minutes and refresh your memory by reading your list of reasons.

16) Acknowledge Your Grief

If you get the [holiday blues](#), take steps to acknowledge and manage your feelings. Denial only makes holiday depression worse.

17) Call a Friend

Take a few minutes to [connect with someone](#) you care about. Your spirits will be lifted, and chances are you'll lift theirs too.

18) Count Your Blessings

Spend some time reflecting on all of the [things in your life that you're grateful for](#). It's a simple yet powerful way to pull out of a slump and renew yourself.

19) Practice Makes Perfect

Smoking cessation is a [process of gradual release over time](#). The associations we've built up between smoking and the activities in our lives over the years must be changed, one by one. And the only way to do that is by simply living life, day in and day out, smoke-free. Navigating the holidays minus the cigarettes is a necessary part of the journey.* Resource: *www.verywell.com Local Support: 724-662-1550



QUIT AND GET FIT!



FREE Tobacco Cessation Program
Space is Limited- Register Today!

WHO: Any Adult (18+ Years) who wants to quit tobacco

WHAT: FREE Program Includes:

- 6 In-Person Cessation Classes and Materials
- 2-Week Supply of NRT (gum, patch or lozenge) to qualified registered participants
- YMCA Membership for the duration of the program
- Exercise Program design, guidance and encouragement by a qualified fitness professional

WHEN: Wednesdays; 11:30am-12:30pm
Jan. 17th, 24th, 31st
Feb. 7th, 9th & 14th

WHERE: Shenango Valley YMCA
925 N. Hermitage Rd.
Hermitage, PA 16148

TO REGISTER: Contact Katie Gassner at
(724) 662-1550, ext. 147

Unable to make classes? Call 1-800-Quit-Now for FREE over-the-phone counseling & support with Nicotine Replacement Therapies.

QUITTING IS TOUGH!
But you can take control over tobacco.
The average user may make 5 - 7 attempts to quit before becoming tobacco-free. Studies show that supportive cessation classes and nicotine replacement therapies increase the likelihood of success!

Proudly presented by these partners:



BHC BULLETIN Extra



Chris Washil began working with the Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission (MCBHC) on March 22, 2004 as an ID Supports Coordinator. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminology with a Minor in Sociology from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He previously worked at Specialized Treatment Services. Chris currently resides in Mercer with his wife Cassie and two children, Pressley (12), and RJ (7). In his spare time he likes coaching softball and soccer, spending time outdoors and is the worship leader for his church.



RECIPE CORNER



Spinach Balls (Appetizer)

2 eggs
2 boxes frozen chopped spinach—thawed and drained well
2 cups Stove Top Stuffing, prepare as directed on box
1/4 cup grated onion
1 stick of melted butter
1 cup parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix together. Roll into small bite-size balls. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes.

Submitted by: Maggie Miller



Welcome to our New Hires:

Krista Wentz



D&A Recovery
BHRS Case Man-
D&A Case

Brandan Collins



Specialist
ager
Coordinator

Amber Baughman



Tracy Auell
Heather
Melinda



Starr
Hammond



Just a few samples of BHC'S decorating contest!!!



KINDNESS CALENDAR - DECEMBER 2017

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible" - Dalai Lama

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
4 Give money for each bed in your house to a homeless charity	5 Count how many people you smile at today	6 Do something helpful for a friend or family member	7 Pick up litter or leaves in your local neighbourhood	8 Say something positive to everyone you meet today	9 Buy some extra items and donate them to a local food bank	10 Give clothes, blankets or toys to others who may need them
11 Do an act of kindness to help an older person	12 Offer hugs to your loved ones and friends	13 Give a compliment to as many people as possible today	14 Leave some money (with a happy note) for someone	15 Pay it forward: pay for a stranger's hot drink in a cafe	16 Make a card or decoration for someone special	17 Take some supplies to a local animal shelter
18 Try out the art of positive gossiping!	19 Cook an extra meal and surprise someone with it	20 Thank people who do things for you but you may take for granted	21 Offer to take a friend's dog out for a nice walk	22 Give someone your place in a queue (in a shop or in traffic)	23 Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat	24 Give money to a good cause for every present you wrap
25 Find ways to be kind to yourself today!	26 Turn off digital devices and really listen to people	27 Get outside into nature and feed the birds today	28 Forgive someone and look for their good points	29 Do a good deed to bring a smile to someone's day	30 Be kind to you: Take a walk and focus on nature's beauty	31 Plan what extra acts of kindness you will do in 2018...

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Thank you to the many kind and creative people who inspired the ideas in this calendar :)

www.actionforhappiness.org