

# RECOVERYToday

July 2023

A publication of the Helio Health Foundation

## Spencer's Story of Recovery

Until his thirties, Spencer's life was good. He had a solid job making a good salary, owned a condo in Florida, and had purchased his dream car. He was in a grounded relationship and had a beautiful toddler son and a new daughter on the way. But chronic pain from a traumatic leg and ankle injury as a teenager resulted in Spencer becoming addicted to opiates. For a while, he managed daily pain with over-the-counter medication, but eventually the hurting became so intense that he was not able to care for and play with his children the way he always dreamed he would – chasing them around the yard, throwing a ball, playing “monster.” His injury left him bound to indoor activities and Spencer wanted a better quality of life for himself and his young family. After discussing it with those closest to him, he decided to visit a physician to discuss pain management – including the risk of dependency – and began a regimen of opiates.

Spencer received tremendous relief from the medication, but over time was requiring higher and higher doses to achieve pain relief. He was building tolerance and would become sick if he missed a dose. He had to keep taking the medication even on days his ankle wasn't hurting badly.

An unexpected job layoff and resulting insurance loss changed the course of Spencer's life forever. With only a week's worth of pain medication and no means to refill his prescription, he was alone to navigate the situation. The next couple of years consisted of Spencer seeking opiates, struggling to find and maintain jobs, and crumbled relationships. He lost his condo, car, partner, and sense of self-respect. His drug-seeking eventually led him to snorting heroin as it was much cheaper and easier to find than pills. There were multiple failed attempts at detox programs. He lost custody of his children, fell into a deep depression, and began to wonder who he was and if he would ever be “himself” again. After an extended period of loneliness and desperate longing for his children, Spencer hit rock bottom. He wanted his life back and was committed to seeking treatment. He spoke with his mother and begged for help in going to NY to seek treatment at Helio Health, which he heard about from a friend.

Upon arriving in Syracuse, Spencer contacted Helio Health and scheduled his first appointment. In treatment, he felt supported and understood and was eager to work toward recovery. In addition, he was determined to regain custody of his children. He knew he had to pull his life together and stayed on track with his appointments. After many meetings with CPS and the courts, a plan was developed to have Spencer's children returned to him and his heart became whole again.

Eventually, Spencer began to reintegrate himself back into a semblance of the life he had before addiction. While meeting with one of his providers, it was suggested he become a Peer Advocate. Spencer realized he could not move on without reaching back to help others who were struggling. He felt that if his story of triumph over adversity could inspire others, it was his duty to share it. He got the job and began his career with Helio Health. Spencer says he receives satisfaction from working with an organization that he believes helped save his life. The feeling of helping others has inspired a sense of purpose he never felt before. Finally, he is on the path that was meant for him.

Today Spencer is happily married and shares a wonderful home with his wife and children. He has been substance-free since August 2019. While he still has challenges, he uses the skills he learned to overcome them. He feels that life is a gift and wants people to know that if they are struggling with mental health and/or substance use, they can join the recovery family at Helio Health: Where Hope Meets Healing.

You can learn more about the people we serve, like Spencer. Visit our website to watch our [Stories of Recovery videos](#).



Helio Health  
FOUNDATION

### In this Issue

Spencer's Story of  
Recovery

Meet our Chief Quality  
Officer

Save the Date - ICS 4th  
Annual Charity Golf  
Tournament

Run For Recovery

Foundation Grants

Healing Through Art

Join Us at the Recovery  
Center

# Helio Health Welcomes Chief Quality Officer



Tara Costello, MSW, brings extensive non-profit and health care management experience to Helio Health's senior leadership team. In her role, she provides quality oversight and strategies consistent with best practices, strategic plan, and culture, while overseeing daily activities.

Mrs. Costello recently served as the Executive Director of the Kelberman Center. Previously, she served as the Vice President of Behavioral Health Services at Upstate Cerebral Palsy, providing program administrative and operational oversight to Office of Mental Health Community Residences, Supported Housing and Outpatient Mental Health Clinics and Care Management. She also assisted in the development of the Health Home affiliate (CNYHHN).

Mrs. Costello received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Utica College and a Master's degree in Social Work with a Human Services Management Certificate from the University at Albany. She enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, including annual vacations to Florida, cooking, and shopping.

Helio Health is honored to be named a beneficiary of ICS' 4th Annual Charity Golf Tournament on Friday, September 15th. **Mark your calendar now and register a team** for this fun event on a beautiful course!

Registration (\$500 foursome / \$125 individual) includes:



Longest drive, closest to the pin, and other course contests



Breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinner, and beverages



Tee gifts for each participant



5 different chances to win prizes on the course including \$10,000 or a trip to Pebble Beach!

For more information or to register, contact Sami Wyatt at [swyatt@icscomplete.com](mailto:swyatt@icscomplete.com).

Click [here](#) to learn more about ICS and how the organization is making a difference in its community.

Can't attend the golf tournament but want to support the Helio Health Foundation? Visit our [website](#) and learn how your gifts have a positive and lasting impact the people we serve.

## ICS Charity Golf Tournament

**ICS 4TH ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**SAVE THE DATE** **FRIDAY, SEPT. 15**  
Endwell Greens Golf Club

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT:

Helio Health Foundation, American Red Cross, The Council

For more information or for questions please email Sami at [swyatt@icscomplete.com](mailto:swyatt@icscomplete.com)



# Run for RECOVERY

WHO DO YOU RUN FOR?



A bright blue sky and two turquoise lakes were the backdrop for the 2023 Run for Recovery 5K and Kids Fun Run on May 6th at Green Lakes State Park. More than 400 people ran and walked to raise awareness and funds to provide hope and healing for individuals recovering from substance use, mental health, and housing challenges.

Together, **we raised more than \$25,000** for the Helio Health Foundation! Heartfelt thanks to all who participated, our amazing crew of volunteers for making the day go so smoothly, and our committed sponsors for their support.

**Mark your calendar now for the 2024 Run for Recovery on May 18th!**





# A Mother's Journey of Healing Through Art

Earlier this year, the Helio Health Foundation received an email from artist and retired art teacher Maryanne Rappaport. She wrote, "In 2012, my son, Adam was blessed to have had an opportunity for growth at your facility. I am forever thankful for all that Helio Health taught him, and me. I visited every weekend to see him and attend your classes to try to better understand his situation. This was the closest he and I had been since his childhood. He loved creating in your art room! I cherish those memories (and paintings) now. Adam died by suicide in 2014. He was addicted and affected by bi-polar disease, and was the most beautiful, loving human being on the face of the Earth."

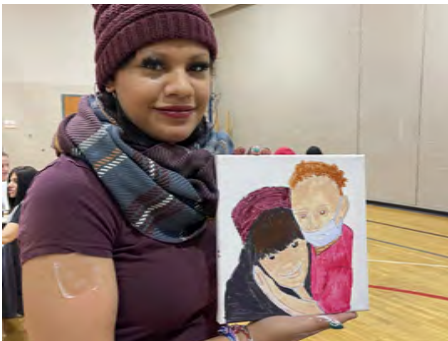
She continued, "Through art, I learned how to turn Adam's love for me into my new purpose. Since his passing, I've volunteered in many capacities to honor him, and I started my own paint party business. Recently, I realized that I had finally reached a point in my healing where I could reach out to propose leading an art activity for your residential participants."

We did not hesitate to take Maryanne up on her offer, and more than 20 residents eagerly signed up to paint. Each was encouraged to invite a family member or support person.

Participants submitted a photo of a happy memory which Maryanne hand drew onto a canvas numbered with corresponding paint numbers. This "paint by numbers" method encourages meaningful conversations between artists and the painting becomes a mindless background activity to support the healing that naturally takes place. People reconnect with their memories of love and loss, and focus on recovery. Counselors were on hand for support as needed.

Residents said they had a meaningful and fun experience creating their paintings, and are looking forward to Maryanne's return later this fall for another round of painting infused with hope and healing.

Do you have a special skill or talent you would like to share with the people we serve? Complete our [Volunteer Application](#) and drop us a note with your project idea!





## HELIO HEALTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shane McCrohan, Chair  
*Scolaro, Fetter, Grizanti, McGough & King, P.C.*

Martin McDermott, Vice Chair  
*JF Real Estate*

Lisa Morrow-Whittaker, Secretary  
*Communications Consultant*

Travis Smith, Treasurer  
*Dermody, Burke and Brown, CPAs*

Scott Lickstein  
*Newman and Lickstein*

Shane Attlee  
*Ernst & Young*

Joseph Zikuski  
*City of Binghamton Chief of Police*

Cheryl Pusztai  
*YMCA Greater Syracuse*

John Balzano  
*Utica City Court Judge (Retired)*

David Mathis  
*Director of Oneida County Workforce Development*

James D'Onofrio  
*Oneida County Legislator*

Helen Lopez

Scott McGuinness, Ph.D.  
*University of Rochester, School of Education*

Pat Buell

Robert Johnson

## Foundation Awards Project Grants

### *Project ideas conceived by Helio Health colleagues*

This spring, seven inspiring projects that support hope and healing were awarded grants from the Helio Health Foundation.

Gateway CR-SRO, an Office of Mental Health residential program, received funds for its "Hoops for Healthy Living" project which will promote a sense of community by purchasing a basketball hoop, games, and arts and crafts.

Funds were awarded to Hawthorn CR-SRO to purchase a lifetime Empire Pass and annual Rosamond Gifford Zoo pass to afford residents the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities and learning experiences.

Lincoln Residential Rehabilitation received a grant to expand its outdoor garden and purchase kitchen tools and accessories for the "Lincoln's Track to Wellness" project. Residents will participate in cooking classes utilizing produce grown in the garden.

A grant was provided to the Meadows Outpatient Psychiatric Rehabilitation program to fund the "Making a Meal Together" project which aims to assist participants in gaining confidence in a public setting and in building connections with others by making and eating a weekly meal together.

The ever-popular Art in Recovery program at the Recovery Center received a grant to continue and expand art programming including monthly art activities, a Coloring Club, and "free art" time.

Funds were granted to the Alumni Club with the goal of providing opportunities for engagement and connection via in-person activities and outings.

Lastly, four CR-SROs - Genesee Street, Homestead, Gateway, and Hawthorn - received a collective grant to fund a summer picnic complete with a petting zoo, live music, balloon creations, and lawn games to promote recreation and social wellness.

Annual grants awarded by the Helio Health Foundation are made possible by generous donors like you as well as fundraising events such as the Run For Recovery and Giving Tuesday.

Will you lend your support to people working toward recovery?  
To make a gift to the Helio Health Foundation, please visit our secure [donation page](#).

For more information about the Foundation or to learn how you can become involved with our mission and work, contact Susan LaPlaca, Development Director, at 315.474.5506 x 1245 or [slaplaca@helio.health](mailto:slaplaca@helio.health).





Executive Leadership Office  
555 East Genesee Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202

#### FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ted Jeske, Chair  
*110 Metalworks*

Anne Tindall, Secretary  
*Employee Management Strategies, Inc.*

Joe Bright, Treasurer  
*Dunk & Bright Furniture*

Lisa Morrow  
*Communications Consultant*

Camille Coakley  
*ADP Solutions REG/Atlanta Sports City*

Ozzie Crisalli  
*Syracuse Realty Group*



## Join us at the Recovery Center!

714 Hickory Street, Syracuse, NY 13203 | (315) 701-1518

### **Drop in for a recovery-oriented group or peer supports!**

Coffee & Conversation | Art Group | Health Coaching | Food for Thought  
Group Fitness Outings | Creative Writing | Narcan Training | Movie Night  
Coloring Club | Meditation | Job Coaching | Support Groups

**Learn more at [www.helio.health/in-community/recovery-center/](http://www.helio.health/in-community/recovery-center/)**

**Please call for summer hours and programming.**

