

Every Step Has a Story

Special moments from the Run for Recovery's 10th Anniversary



Jim Proietti



Jess & Abby (age 3) Wood



Bernardus De Rooij (right) and his dad

One of the most meaningful parts of the Run for Recovery 5K & Kids Fun Run isn't measured by finish times—it's measured by the stories behind each participant. Every runner arrives with a different reason for lacing up their shoes. Some run in celebration, some in remembrance, some in support of a loved one, and others as part of their own recovery journey. Together, their stories remind us that hope is always worth pursuing.

For the past several years, Jim Proietti has been one of those runners. This year, he generously shared the deeply personal story behind why the Run for Recovery holds special meaning.

Jim's son, Jeff, had an infectious passion for life. As a young athlete, he discovered a love for running through track and field and found joy in challenging himself and encouraging others to stay active. Later, Jeff embraced obstacle races, inspired by the camaraderie of people who started and finished together.

Everything changed in an instant when Jeff was tragically killed by a distracted driver. In the months that followed, Jim struggled to cope with overwhelming grief. He withdrew from the people who loved him and turned to substance use in an attempt to numb the pain. Eventually, he realized that healing could only begin by facing his loss and choosing recovery.

Today, Jim describes healing simply: "To continue to do the next right thing."



Scan the QR code to watch Jim's inspirational video and learn more about his healing journey.

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Recovery also meant rediscovering one of the things Jeff loved most—being physically active. That's why the Run for Recovery became such an important part of Jim's journey.

"It was right up my alley," Jim says. "Inspiring people to run, walk, and move. That's what Jeff wanted."

To honor his son's legacy, Jim and his family established the Jeff Proetti Wellness Foundation, carrying forward Jeff's passion for health, fitness, and helping others. "I didn't want his passion for life to die with him," Jim explains. "I run for Jeff. And I also run for all of those who are still fighting addiction. If I can find my way forward, I know you can, too."

Jim's story reminds us that recovery isn't always a straight path. Sometimes it begins with grief. Sometimes it begins with hope. And sometimes it begins with simply taking the next step.

That same spirit could be found throughout this year's Run for Recovery.



Abby Wood, age 11

For Jess Wood, the event has become a family tradition. In 2017, her two-year-old daughter, Abby, proudly ran the entire one-mile Kids Fun Run, insisting, "Mama, I run on my feet!" Nine years later, Abby completed the 5K after discovering a love for running through community races and school cross country. As she approached the finish line, the cheers from the crowd gave her the strength to keep going. Now she has her sights set on earning an age-group award—and someday taking home one of the coveted Run for Recovery medals.

For Bernardus De Rooij, the race represented resilience and family. After recovering from a devastating Achilles tendon injury and a life-threatening pulmonary embolism, he began training with his 66-year-old father. Together they completed the Mountain Goat Run, crossing the finish line arm in arm. When they signed up for the Run for Recovery, they challenged themselves to finish in under 31 minutes—and did just that with an impressive time of 29:28.

Whether someone is honoring the memory of a loved one, celebrating a milestone in recovery, achieving a personal goal, or simply walking beside a friend, every participant brings a story to the starting line. Together, those stories create something far greater than a race—they create a community built on resilience and the belief that no one has to make the journey alone.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our 10th Annual Run for Recovery. Every step taken and every story shared reminds us why this event continues to inspire hope, healing, and recovery.

Mark your calendar now for the 11th Annual Run for Recovery on Saturday, May 15, 2027!

Helio Health Foundation Grant Projects in Action

Mobile Crisis Unit Begins “Responding With Humanity” Project



Each year, your generous donations help fund Foundation grants for projects that enhance the lives of the people we serve. The Mobile Crisis Unit received a grant to purchase essential clothing and hygiene supplies to support individuals experiencing homelessness and others with unmet basic needs.

Recognizing the value of these items in engagement efforts, supplies were integrated into all Mobile Crisis vehicles, significantly increasing accessibility and

distribution in the field. These resources have not only addressed immediate basic needs, but have also served as a critical engagement tool—enhancing rapport, trust, and willingness to accept services among high-acuity individuals.

Notably, on two occasions, the ability to provide basic necessities directly contributed to successful transitions to a higher level of care (HLOC), and on another, supported initiation of the inpatient admission process for substance use disorder treatment. In each case, meeting foundational needs was a key factor in building the trust necessary for individuals to accept further intervention. Sam Castleberry, grant project director said, “Without the support of the Helio Health Foundation Grant, these connections to care may not have been possible.”

Oneida County Drug Court Expansion Introduces the “Graduation Celebration” Project

Since implementing its grant in January, Drug Court Expansion has provided recovery t-shirts, cupcakes, and assorted Helio Health “swag” to 16 graduates. Andrea LoParco, grant project director, shared, “The presentation of graduation gifts has allowed us to pause and show appreciation for how far our graduates have come. The response from participants has been great. I ran into a participant that graduated in March and he told me that whenever he is having a rough day, he wears his graduation t-shirt, and it reminds him that he can overcome obstacles one day at a time.”



Will you lend your financial support to people working toward recovery from substance use, mental health, and housing challenges? To make a gift, visit our secure [donation page](#). Your kindness transforms lives.

Save the Date!

Recovery Month BBQ



Mark your calendar for the 4th Annual Recovery Month Community BBQ on **Saturday, September 5th from noon - 3:00 p.m.**, hosted by the Helio Health Recovery Center. Join us at 714 Hickory Street, Syracuse to celebrate recovery and enjoy (abundant!) food, lawn games, and camaraderie. It's an afternoon of hope and healing you won't want to miss! There is no cost for the BBQ, **and all are welcome!**

The Recovery Center is a peer-led, drop-in community center serving the Syracuse and surrounding communities by providing a safe space to support individuals in recovery as well as their family and friends. It provides programs, meetings, resources, and special events, inclusive to the entire recovery community. The Community BBQ is held to kick off Recovery Month, spreading awareness that *recovery is possible*.

Investing in Helio Health's Mission for Years to Come

We're excited to share a powerful new opportunity to make a lasting impact.

In partnership with the Upstate Foundation, a trusted fund manager, Helio Health recently **established an Endowment**—a key step in building long-term sustainability for our mission. With your continued support, the Endowment will provide steady, reliable resources to help people on their recovery journey for generations to come.

Whether it's someone reclaiming their life after addiction, finding stability through housing, or receiving individualized care for mental health challenges, your gift today can ensure that help is always there when it's needed most.

We invite you to be part of this inspiring legacy. Every contribution—no matter the size—moves us closer to our vision of long-term, life-changing support.

Please consider making a gift to our Endowment today.

Mail your tax deductible gift to: Upstate Foundation, c/o Helio Health Endowment
750 E. Adams Street, Syracuse, NY 13210-9943

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HELIO HEALTH ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2026

BELLEVUE COUNTRY CLUB

1901 Glenwood Avenue, Syracuse

Shotgun start 12:30pm

**YOUR GENEROSITY
TRANSFORMS LIVES**

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

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**REGISTER
TODAY**



SCAN ME

REGISTER NOW, SPACE IS LIMITED

**JOIN US AND
PLAY A ROUND
FOR RECOVERY**

Questions:

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Your Impact

Because of your generosity ...

- ✓ More than 22,000 people receive services each year at Helio Health.

Your support also helps fund Foundation grants that:

- ✓ Provide clothing and hygiene supplies to people experiencing crisis and homelessness.
 - ✓ Celebrate Drug Court graduates and recognized their recovery milestones.
 - ✓ Furnish stable housing with new beds and bedding.
 - ✓ Expand access to creative arts therapy for residential participants.
- ✓ Supply basic clothing to inpatient and detox patients, providing dignity, comfort, and warmth.

Whether you make a one-time gift, sponsor an event, purchase a ticket, recommend a grant through your donor-advised fund, or support one of our fundraising campaigns, your generosity makes recovery possible for individuals and families throughout our community.

Every story in this newsletter begins with someone who cared.
Thank you for helping create the next story of hope, healing, and recovery.