

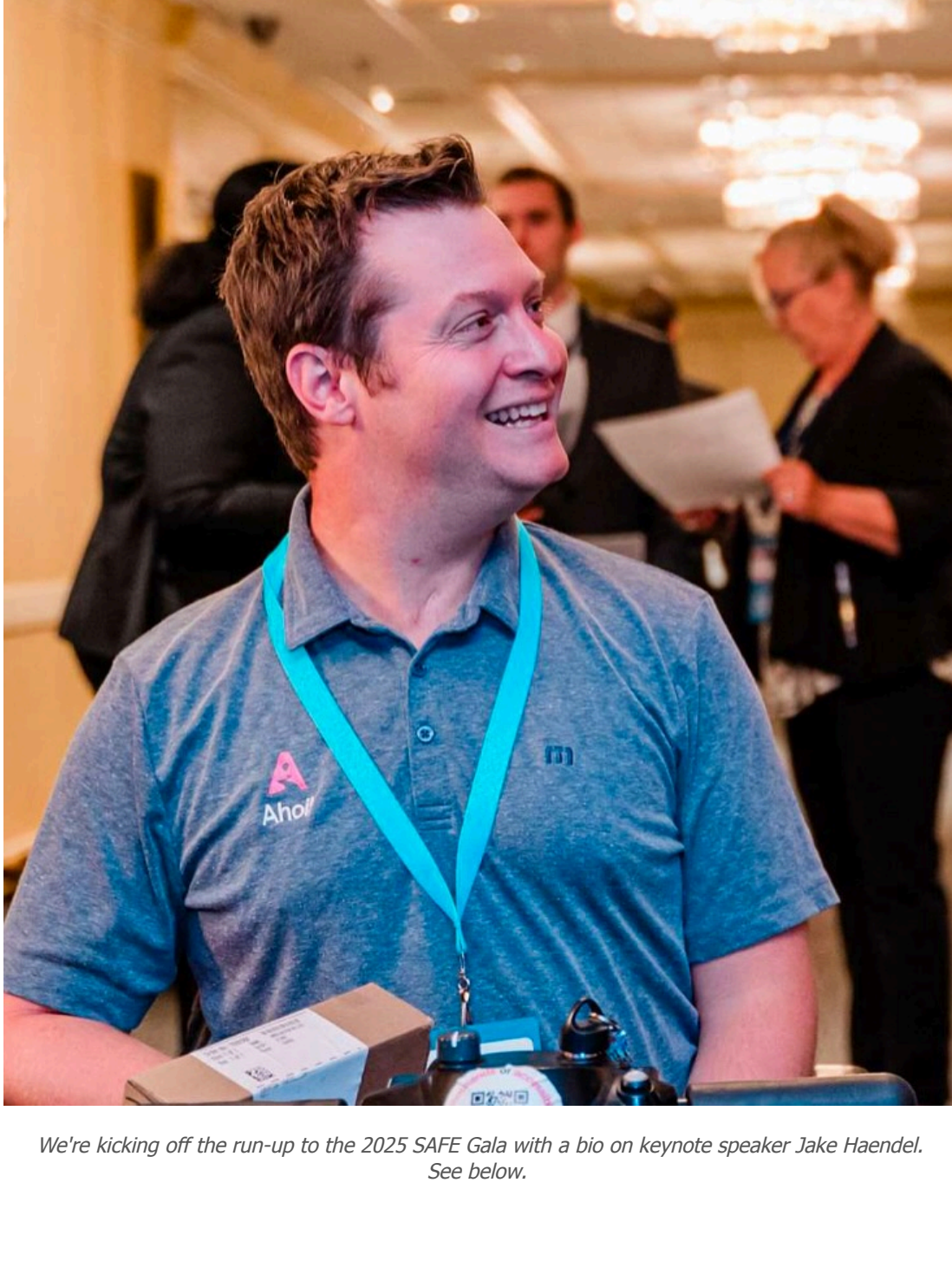


**SAFE**

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

## News and Events

### February 2025



We're kicking off the run-up to the 2025 SAFE Gala with a bio on keynote speaker Jake Haendel. See below.

## NEWS AND NOTICES

A complete list of [SAFE programs](#) and [events](#) can be found on our website.

### New! Virtual Postpartum Group

Starting March 5th, we will offer a virtual postpartum group option, Wednesdays from 6:30-7:30pm on Zoom. All pregnant and postpartum moms in the area are welcome. Registration is free but required. [Learn more and sign up here.](#)

### Sober Moms Support Group

SAFE is hosting a new drop-in support group for sober moms and those curious about sobriety! Join us for conversation and connection. Every Thursday, 7-8pm at SAFE. Free to attend. [Register here.](#)

### Narcan Trainings and Drop-In Hours

Visit our open office hours to meet with a SAFE clinical social worker for resources, questions and concerns related to mental health and substance use. First 30 minutes of every office hour will have public training on how to administer lifesaving medicine that reverses the effects of overdose from opioids like fentanyl, heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. Free to the public and no registration required.

Foxborough – Monday, February 24 6:30 PM  
Wheaton College – Friday, February 28 12:00 – 1:00 PM  
Norfolk – Wednesday, March 5 10:00 – 11:00 AM  
Medway – Thursday, March 6 10:00 – 11:30 AM  
Wrentham – Thursday, March 6 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Or stop by the SAFE office for a 30-minute training session between 10am–1pm, Mon–Thurs. [Email us](#) to schedule a session.



[Register Here](#)



## Our Doors are Open

Drop by SAFE Cafe on Fridays 8:30am-12pm to share a cup of coffee, meet a member of our team, and discover offerings that work for you

## THE BIG STORY

### FRANKLIN AND NORFOLK TO PARTNER WITH SAFE ON OPIOID CRISIS



*Opioid abatement funds are intended to address gaps in care and increase access to treatment and services for Opioid Use Disorder, prevention, and harm reduction.*

SAFE has contracted with the towns of Franklin and Norfolk to deliver community-wide lifesaving opioid use prevention, education, and recovery services in 2025.

The services will be funded by the towns' respective municipal opioid abatement funds, which are intended to help communities overcome harm caused by the opioid epidemic.

Funding will enable SAFE to remain the only nonprofit in southeast Massachusetts offering wraparound, zero-cost substance use and mental health services to individuals and families. Thanks to the opioid abatement funding, SAFE will relaunch key programming specifically for Franklin and Norfolk residents and expand capacity for key services. In addition, Franklin and Norfolk teens will now have free access to SAFE's substance use prevention and recovery program, Up in Smoke.

"The opioid epidemic is still impacting our friends, neighbors, and communities" says SAFE Community Outreach Counselor Dr. Stephanie Heath. "Overdoses are still happening, and families are impacted forever. We want to help people before they get to that point, and we want to help the people who have gotten to that point"

The funding represents a significant investment in a rising crisis. While statewide opioid overdose and death have decreased in recent years, numbers in Franklin and Norfolk are growing. Franklin experienced the larger surge, with a 66% increase in opioid-related deaths between 2022 and 2023.

"Nearly half of adults in Franklin are unable to access substance use services" says Heath. "This is preventable, and we're finally able to offer that help."

SAFE's strategy will be tailored to specific needs in Franklin and Norfolk, bringing together solutions designed to help community members with everything from education and prevention to harm reduction, recovery, grief support and family care.

Residents can expect to see the growth of SAFE's presence in the community, offering increased support for everything from preventative courses for teens to walk-in counseling hours at SAFE, expanded support groups like family recovery and grandparents raising grandkids, grief counseling, medication take-backs, and walk-in Narcan training.

SAFE will also further existing partnerships with other community support organizations like Wayside Youth & Family Support Network, Turning Point Recovery Support Center, Learn to Cope, Hockomock Area YMCA, Franklin Police Department, and Norfolk County Sheriff's Office. SAFE works with its partners to coordinate referrals and build lifesaving support systems.

Opioid abatement funds typically seek to impact the opioid misuse and addiction crisis through several key strategies including supporting people in treatment and recovery, building greater connections to care, offering harm reduction (like Narcan, fentanyl test strips, and safe syringe programs), supporting parents and families, and preventing misuse through prevention education.

To date, SAFE has partnered with twelve municipalities across southeastern Massachusetts to advise, coordinate, and deliver community services related to opioid abatement funds.

Massachusetts has participated in nationwide financial settlements with several companies as part of the historic legal efforts to demand abatement of the harms caused by the opioid epidemic. These settlements combined will bring over \$900 million into Massachusetts for substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support.

## SAFE 2025 GALA CORNER

### Meet the Keynote: Jake Haendel



SAFE's 3rd annual 2025 Gala May 8th at Lakeview Pavilion in Foxborough. We'll be bringing you previews and info on all the exciting things we have planned for the big event. Our coverage begins with an introduction to keynote speaker Jake Haendel.

Born in metro Boston, Jake struggled with substance misuse in early adulthood. His recovery journey took a turn after being diagnosed with a rare and life-threatening brain disease in 2017. In that time, Jake also developed "locked-in syndrome", a condition causing complete body paralysis.

"It was the worst you can imagine. It was like being a prisoner in solitary confinement," says Jake.

Despite all odds, Jake recovered both from both conditions. Today, Jake is able to look forward in life with a positive mindset, crediting his recovery with a shift in thinking.

More recently, Jake has become a voice for recovery, sharing his story on his [YouTube channel](#) and popular podcast, [Blink](#), which details his survival with a deadly illness and overcoming addiction. His podcast remains at #2 on the Apple Podcasts Top Series chart today. He has also developed a smartphone application [Ahol](#), which directs users to locations that meet specific accessibility needs.

And that's only the beginning. "That's a lot of what I want to do with my life now is just help and motivate people," says Jake.

*Join us for an inspiring evening at the 3rd annual SAFE Gala: An Evening of Giving on May 8, 2025, at the Lakeview Pavilion (Foxboro, MA) in support of our mission to be a compassionate, judgment-*



free community organization for those affected by substance use disorder and mental health concerns.

Enjoy a gourmet dinner, live music, empowering guest speakers, and exciting silent and live auctions—all while helping us break down barriers to treatment and support across southeastern Massachusetts.

Join us as a guest or purchase a sponsorship package. [Learn more here](#)

# Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

**6:30–7:30 PM**  
2nd & 4th Thursdays

**Free childcare!**

**Bernon Branch YMCA**  
45 Forge Hill Rd  
upstairs meeting room

**Online option available**

Email [info@safecoalitionma.org](mailto:info@safecoalitionma.org)  
to register or to receive Zoom login

## FAMILY RECOVERY CORNER

### A BRIEF STUDY OF SHAME



By Robyn Heisey

One summer not long ago while visiting Norway, I witnessed people shooting up drugs in plain sight. It occurred to me that if someone did the same thing in the States, 911 would be called. After making sure that the person was still breathing, they might be arrested.

Here in America, cloaked in shame, our loved ones who suffer from addiction are isolated in their sickness, often further misusing substances rather than choosing rehabilitation. And those who love them suffer in their own isolation, cloaked in that very same shame.

One person in my Families Anonymous group shared that their best friend didn't know the real story of why their son was in jail. Shame kept them from sharing the details. Not only were they afraid that they wouldn't get the support they desperately needed, they also feared that their friend might shun them – and blame them for their son's struggles.

Shame runs fathoms deep. While those suffering from addiction can (and do) often die after one too many overdoses, those who love them are often dying from the inside out.

A significant number of those in my FA group endure serious medical conditions, no doubt aggravated or brought on by high cortisol levels caused by stress. They suffer stress from the shame of having tried too long—in silence, alone—to do as all big-hearted co-dependents do: to save their loved one's life while neglecting their very own.

When my son hit rock bottom, I struggled with self-care, drinking at night to numb the feelings of terror, helplessness, and shame. Pouring a drink along with a block of cheese or a license plate-sized bar of chocolate I'd think, "You deserve this nightly party of one with all you're going through and endured."

I see now the shame I felt and the way I numbed it. I found myself a recovery program, quit drinking, and realized it was up to me and only me (just like it was up to my son and only my son) to begin shedding my shame and making myself better. And I secured a sponsor in my FA program and stopped going at it alone. And all of me, body, spirit, and mind started to heal.

Working the 12 steps, I faced shame head-on, like the shame of wondering whether if I'd been a better mother, my son would've been saved from so much pain; shame for the out-of-district schools he attended; shame for his behaviors. Prior to learning and living the 12 steps, I was my son, and he, in my eyes, was me. We were without separation, the boundaries between us blurred like the blood and food we shared while he was in utero. The choices he made seemed like my very own.

Today, I've chosen to shed my shame. I've replaced it with love, for myself and the many years I spent seeking the best care for my son. My love for my son no longer enables him but supports him in his ongoing recovery, setbacks and all. And my love colors every day that I wake up.

## Postpartum Support Group

**In Person**  
**Noon–1:30 p.m.**  
**Wednesdays**  
starting March 5

**Bernon Branch YMCA**  
45 Forge Hill Rd, Franklin

**Online**  
**6:30–8 p.m.**  
**Wednesdays**  
starting March 5

[Register for link](#)

This free support group combines peer support and therapy to foster healing, connection, and community for expectant and postpartum moms.

Registration required: [tinyurl.com/safemomgroup](https://tinyurl.com/safemomgroup)

## ONLINE SUBSTANCE USE DIVERSION PROGRAM for Teens

**TURN SCHOOL SUSPENSION INTO A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY**  
DESE-compliant alternative to traditional suspension that fulfills Tier 2 Diversion requirements

**INTERACTIVE LEARNING**  
Uses engaging self-reflection activities, empowers students to make positive decisions & build resilience

**RESEARCH BACKED**  
Adopts proven methods to reduce substance use recidivism & aligns with Mass. state educational laws

**ACCESSIBLE**  
Lets students begin 6-hour course at any time and provides next-step support resources for families

**ENROLL TODAY**

[tinyurl.com/safeuvs](https://tinyurl.com/safeuvs)

This program is designed for 14–18 year olds caught with or at risk of using substances. Graduates will receive a Certificate of Completion and excused absence.

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**CONTACT US**  
(508) 488-8105  
[www.safecoalitionma.org](http://www.safecoalitionma.org)  
[info@safecoalitionma.org](mailto:info@safecoalitionma.org)  
31 Hayward St. Ste 2C, Franklin, MA

## PHOTO GALLERY

### THIS MONTH AT SAFE

If you didn't catch it, check out our CEO Jen Knight-Levine's [interview in the Boston Globe](#) last month.

Thank you to everyone who attended Narcan trainings, adolescent WhyTry courses, and SAFE Cafe drop-in hours! It was great seeing our neighbors at our Mansfield Police Department community Narcan Training (check out Community Outreach Counselor Dr. Steph Heath in action!) and Saturday yoga classes.



Help us continue our life-changing work Make your gift to SAFE today

Donate



#### Our Contact Information

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