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Montcalm County awards opioid settlement money to 5 local organizations

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By [Elisabeth Waldon](#) on December 05, 2023

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Montcalm County Opioid Task Force Committee members, from left, John Kroneck, Liz Braddock, Kate Behrenwald and James Dimitriou are pictured at a Montcalm County Board of Commissioners meeting in September. Commissioners voted on Nov. 27 to approve awarding the committee's recommended \$201,668 to five local organizations to help fight drug addiction in the coming year. — DN file photo

STANTON — Narcan kits in public libraries, a new engagement center in Greenville, an expansion of telehealth services and medication-assisted treatment programs throughout Montcalm County ... these are just a few new public services which will be implemented in the coming year thanks to opioid lawsuit settlement funding.

The Montcalm County Board of Commissioners in early 2018 voted to adopt a resolution approving three law firms representing dozens of Michigan counties in a multi-district lawsuit settlement against opioid manufacturers, and in late 2021 commissioners approved a resolution outlining the terms of the settlement. Montcalm County is expected to receive around \$3 million from the settlement over 18 years.

Commissioners on Nov. 27 voted unanimously to approve the county's Opioid Task Force Committee recommendation of awarding \$201,668 as the first round of opioid settlement funding as follows:

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The initial amount requested by Corewell raised a few eyebrows among commissioners.

“Was their request just to shoot for the moon and you guys pared it back?” Chairman Patrick Q. Carr asked.

“Yes, it did not seem appropriate to have such a difference between organizations that are doing a lot of the same work,” responded Task Force Committee member Kate Behrenwald, who works as a physician assistant for Corewell Health Addiction Medicine. “Also Corewell did not put forth in their budget what their indirect cost would be, so it was felt that that would not be a necessary item because they did not declare that.”

• **MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT:** \$68,511.29 was awarded to Sheridan Care to expand their medication-assisted treatment (MAT) program by adding a counselor, a recovery coach, additional provider time and to pre-order a sufficient supply of Sublocade (the amount awarded will fund 11% of the total cost of the program expansion).

• **ENGAGEMENT CENTER:** \$43,000 was awarded to Randy’s House in Greenville (the requested amount was \$50,000) to provide funding for a part-time program administrator/caseworker for a newly created Peer-Operated Engagement Center which will function as a transitional location for accessible and inclusive services between hospital release and recovery.

Kroneck said the new Engagement Center in Greenville will serve as a place for people to begin a treatment process instead of waiting in a jail cell or in a hospital’s Emergency Room.

“It’s a new initiative coming to the county,” Kroneck said. “A person would only be there for 23 hours before being moved to a treatment center. An ER isn’t really set up to treat these situations. These people need help. If they’ve committed a crime, they’ll be in jail, but if they just need help and we can get them started, that’s what this is for.”

• **NARCAN KITS IN LIBRARIES:** \$14,000 was awarded to the Mid-Michigan District Health Department in Stanton to provide first aid/Narcan kits to communities via distribution through eight public libraries within the county. Narcan is a nasal spray that can reverse an opioid overdose if applied to the person in time.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Promotion Supervisor John Kroneck said Flat River Community Library in Greenville and Tamarack District Library in Lakeview already offer free Narcan kits to anyone who wants them.

“We want to partner with the other six libraries (in Carson City, Crystal Township, Edmore, Howard City, Stanton and Vestaburg) to make sure we’re reaching the full county,” Kroneck said. “We have not been able to keep them in supply (at the libraries in Greenville and Lakeview). We’re constantly running to keep up with them. The libraries really reach all areas of the county, it’s a natural relationship for us.

“I’m planning to put one in my vehicle just case I’m ever somewhere when someone can use it,” said Montcalm County Controller-Administrator Brenda Taeter.

• **ALANO CLUB SERVICES:** \$7,667.76 to the Montcalm Alano Club in Greenville to pay overhead costs of keeping the doors open for those individuals that currently utilize their facility/services, as well as future individuals in need of their facility/services.

Other requests received but not awarded at this time were:

• \$89,564 requested by Have Mercy in Greenville for a Step Up program for men and women in Montcalm and Ionia counties.

• \$72,188 requested by Corewell Health to provide funding for a free to the consumer “Day of Education” for all community and county progression.

• \$66,000 requested by 8th Judicial Circuit Court to provide program expansion to allow five more Montcalm County participants in the program, as well as funding for a peer recovery coach.

• \$58,360 requested by the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative for school-based on-site advisors for youth clubs in all six high schools in Montcalm County.



Corewell Health's Greenville Family Medicine facility, with the walk-in clinic pictured to the left. Montcalm County is awarding \$68,500 to Corewell Health to provide funding to expand telehealth services into clinics in Lakeview and Greenville to provide services to a greater number of patients throughout Montcalm County, eliminating transportation and access to treatment barriers. — Submitted photo | Corewell Health



Corewell Health opened the Lakeview Care Center in June. Montcalm County is awarding \$68,500 to Corewell Health to provide funding to expand telehealth services into clinics in Lakeview and Greenville to provide services to a greater number of patients throughout Montcalm County, eliminating transportation and access to treatment barriers. — Submitted photo | Corewell Health

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- \$50,000 requested by Randy’s House for a peer recovery coach and residential recovery housing grants.
- \$46,862 rented by Samaritan Health Care for start-up costs related to opening a proposed intensive outpatient program in Greenville.
- \$39,600 requested by MacDonald Garber Broadcasting in Petoskey to create digital display advertising as it relates to the opioid epidemic in Montcalm County.
- \$16,940 requested by the Montcalm Care Network in Stanton to re-establish Ionia-Montcalm Families Against Narcotics.

“There’s a long list of people who were rejected,” Commissioner Phil Kohn noted. “Was there any disagreement over this list of five, or was it obvious?”

Taeter responded that the committee took more than three hours to make its first round of recommendations and there was a lot of good discussion.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Kimberly Becher of Greenville spoke during public comment at the Nov. 27 county board meeting, thanking county officials for supporting the expansion of local resources for opioid addicts.

“My daughter was addicted to heroin and fentanyl for over 10 years,” Becher said. “She started in Florida. She has scoliosis. She got prescription after prescription from doctors in Florida and she got addicted to that and then they passed a law to cut that off and she turned to heroin, and then it was fentanyl.

“Dr. Kate (Behrenwald) was phenomenal with helping our family,” she said. “It was Dr. Kate who told my daughter, ‘We caused this problem and the least we can do is fix it because we wrote these prescriptions for these people.’

“We have been through you know what,” Becher summarized. “But I can’t say this without giving glory to God because this momma bear was on her knees morning and night at 3 a.m. for I don’t know how many years begging God to do something to intervene, and he did. Dr. Kate and some others helped her get through this.

“My daughter has been clean since January of 2020,” she said. “We’re working on it. We’re beating it. It took a lot of family support and people in the community. So thank you for supporting them, because they’re doing great work.”

Becher now operates New Beginnings Christian Counseling LLC in Greenville.

“We need to take a really good look at what’s happening in our county,” she said. “It’s mental, it’s physical and it’s spiritual, and this county has a huge problem.”

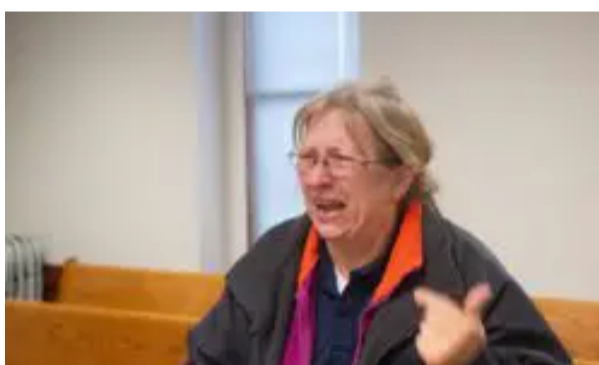
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