

# NRVCS

NEW RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUMMER 2024

*WDBJ7's Kate Capodanno*

## A Game for Hope

NRVCS teams up with  
the Pulaski River Turtles  
to celebrate wellness and  
a new baseball season



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1

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ON THE COVER:  
 Kate Capodanno, a news anchor with WDBJ7, holds a baseball autographed by members of the 2024 Pulaski River Turtles. Capodanno was a special guest at "A Game for Hope," held Monday, June 3 at historic Calfee Park in Pulaski. (Photo - Ross Wilsie/NRVCS)



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*"Hope is connection, and love, and acceptance. ...What a gift that I get to live with hope today. It's one of my most valued possessions."*

- Ferletta Martinez  
 Certified Peer Recovery Specialist  
 New River Valley Community Services

**HOPE**  
 live with it



[nrvc.org/hope](http://nrvc.org/hope)



# Agent of HOPE

David St. John

By Mike Wade / NRVCS  
Photo by Ross Wilsie / NRVCS

David St. John, a veteran member of the New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) team, has been named program director of the agency's continuum of services for substance use disorders.

St. John has been with NRVCS since 2007, beginning with the Intensive In-Home Services program. He's also worked in school-based services, managed case management services, and supervised the agency's SAFE (Strategic Assertive Family Engagement) services, among others.

St. John says one of his most fulfilling opportunities with NRVCS thus far has been working in juvenile competency restoration, where he helped prepare youth for court appearances by providing guidance on what to expect during those proceedings and to also ensure that clients knew their rights.

For the last several years, however, St. John's work has been primarily focused on serving individuals challenged by the disease of addiction. He says it's a population he's come to better understand over time and has developed a greater appreciation for the struggles they face.

"I think it's unfortunately a population that gets overlooked," St. John points out. "I like working with people who feel like we can help have a voice and by doing so, relieve some of the stigma and stereotypes that can be so detrimental to their recovery."

"There are a lot of things I've seen that make me passionate about this particular population," adds St. John, "and I kind of like rooting for - and working for - the underdog."

St. John admits that increased concerns about substance use disorders is not something unique to the New River Valley, but a more global issue.

"It's a tall task to be sure," explains St. John. "There's a nationwide lack of resources to address a very prominent issue."

While finding ways to serve more individuals is an obvious goal for most providers, he says the real key is making sure individuals are able to access the level of care they need -



when they need it.

"Having to wait to get help can be a real deterrent for some people," he notes. "So, it's important that we do all we can to prevent that from happening."

"Access is absolutely the biggest hurdle at this point," adds St. John.

He says another significant challenge providers face is overcoming the generational issues around addiction.

"It's such a big contributing factor," he says, "but it's also very difficult to make a lasting impact...You're critically looking at the way a person was raised, what they know and what they understand. It takes more than a month of treatment to undo 30 years of a person's life."

St. John points out that NRVCS has been intentional about integrating evidence-based practices into the services provided, and will continue to do so under his leadership. He also hopes to increase community awareness of substance use disorders to help decrease stigma.

"I wish the general community had a better understanding of the critical nature of the situations we typically find our clients in," remarks St. John. "Their needs are often times very immediate - and when your basic needs are not being met, the other things become secondary."

## NRVCS' Continuum of Care for Substance Use Disorders

New River Valley Community Services' programs and treatment for substance use disorders follows criteria established by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)

- **Outpatient Services (Individual or Group):** Supports and provides treatment to adults who have identified substance use or co-occurring mental health diagnosis in the least restrictive manner possible. Individuals referred must have a demonstrated need for services and be able to benefit from the continuum of services offered, with the most appropriate, least restrictive service offered first.
- **Intensive Outpatient Services ("Stepping Stones"):** Provides treatment in an outpatient setting that is more intensive than traditional outpatient services, but less intensive than partial hospitalization. Requires the person to attend group sessions which are a minimum of three hours in duration three times a week (9 hours total). Individuals are encouraged to attend twelve-step, Celebrate Recovery, SMART Recovery, or other support group meetings at least weekly. The Living in Balance curriculum is utilized.
- **Partial Hospitalization Program ("Recovery Dojo"):** SUD day treatment consists of regularly scheduled sessions five hours per day, four days per week for a total of 20 hours per week. This level of care is designed to offer highly structured intensive treatment to those individuals who are at risk for hospitalization and whose condition is sufficiently stable as not to require 24-hour per-day monitoring and care, however, the illness has progressed to require consistent near-daily treatment intervention.
- **Residential Treatment (New Life Recovery Center):** New Life Recovery is a 10 bed, 24 hour-per-day, 7 day-per-week residential treatment facility offering services to individuals 18 years of age or older, who have a primary diagnosis of Substance Use Disorder. Length of stay is determined by ASAM criteria. The program also provides treatment to individuals with co-occurring mental illnesses.
- **SAFE (Strategic Assertive Family Engagement):** Not purely a substance use disorder treatment model but a philosophical approach to treating parents that have been difficult to engage in treatment for various reasons. The program strives to overcome unique challenges in engaging these parents by using the essential underpinnings of the Community Reinforcement Approach.
- **Recovery Court:** Recovery Courts are specialized court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system offering judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and strict supervision of those with a substance use disorder. DTC offers a second chance by providing access to sober housing, employment, treatment, recovery resources, and providing support and encouragement.
- **Peer Support Services:** Peer Support Services is a person centered, strength-based, and recovery oriented rehabilitative service. Peers are individuals who have been successful in the recovery process with lived experience with mental health, substance use disorders, or co-occurring disorders. Peers are trained to offer support and assistance in helping others in the recovery process to reduce the disabling effects of mental health, substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorders.
- **Bridge Program & Non-Emergency Jail Services:** The Bridge Program is a jail diversion program designed to divert clients with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders away from the criminal justice system and into community-based treatment and services. Additionally, NRVCS provides services to local and regional jail facilities, following procedures allow for the provision of non-emergency mental health and substance use treatment services to incarcerated individuals.

### St. John

*Continued from previous page*

"If you're dealing with someone who's starving or hungry, your immediate concern isn't their substance use history - you have to get them something to eat first," he adds.

That element of compassion is what drives St. John's approach to helping individuals find recovery.

"It's just really about believing in people and knowing that most of them truly want the best life they can have - and that looks differently for each of us - so, we have to bear that in mind," he adds. "Ultimately, we want our work to result in our clients being happy, healthy people - whatever the definition of that is for them."



**By Mike Wade / NRVCS**  
**Photos by Ross Wilsie / NRVCS**

PULASKI - For many, summer and baseball go hand-in-hand. This is especially true for communities like Pulaski that boast their own team and a ballpark that's been recognized as one of the most historic in the United States.

Despite their rich history, Pulaski's Appalachian League team, the River Turtles, had never hosted a preseason game - until this year. Once team officials approached NRVCS earlier this year about a potential sponsorship of the preseason game and the opportunity to turn the event into a fundraiser, the idea quickly gained momentum.

Billed as "A Game for Hope," the game was developed as an extension of NRVCS' ongoing "HOPE" wellness campaign - providing an opportunity for community members to actively engage in several aspects of wellness, including fun and recreation, family, and friends. Officials also determined that proceeds from the game should benefit the county's community prevention coalition, the Pulaski Community Partners Coalition (PCPC).

NRVCS' existing partnership with WDBJ7, the CBS affiliate station based in Roanoke, was instrumental in promoting the game. WDBJ's Kate Capodanno was on hand before the game to meet fans and to throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

The game itself was played on Monday, June 3 at Calfee Park in Pulaski with the host River Turtles defeating the Carolina Disco Turkeys in front of over 600 spectators. River Turtles players all donned specially-designed jerseys during the game that featured the NRVCS "HOPE" campaign logo. The game-worn jerseys were auctioned off after the game, with all proceeds going to PCPC.

Ultimately, the event raised \$1,500 for PCPC. Those funds will help support PCPC's mission to reduce substance abuse and misuse among youth by promoting healthy, thriving families and a safe community by connecting people, resources, and ideas.





**MAKING IT OFFICIAL:** Participants and officials with the Giles County Recovery Court joined Delegates Jason Ballard and Chris Obenshain in Richmond on May 14 to witness Governor Glenn Youngkin's official signing of HB 292, officially renaming the "Drug Treatment Court Act" to the "Recovery Court Act". (Official Photo by Christian Martinez, Office of Governor Glenn Youngkin.)

## Recovery Court gets official name change

By Mike Wade / NRVCs  
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Words matter. Just ask anyone who is in recovery from a mental health and/or substance use disorder. Seeking or accepting help is challenging enough and stigma certainly doesn't help.

Although it may seem insignificant to those not directly involved with the program, the recent move in Virginia to officially change the name of its "Drug Treatment Court" programs to "Recovery Court" is a major achievement for the recovery community.

Following unanimous and bipartisan support from both houses of the Virginia General Assembly earlier this year, Governor Glenn Youngkin signed HB 292, as well as SB725, making the change officially effective July 1, 2024.

The Governor's office says the name change is noteworthy given that it reflects "a broader focus on recovery rather than just treatment, acknowledging the need for a more holistic approach to addressing substance abuse issues."

HB 292 was introduced into the House of Delegates by Del. Jason Ballard, a resident of Giles County.

"The idea...came directly from participants in our local recovery courts," notes Ballard. "...It kept surfacing that the term 'Recovery Court' had a much more positive connotation

than 'Drug Treatment Court,' and that those who committed to the idea of recovery were less likely to relapse."

"Keep in mind that the folks in these programs are actively trying to turn their lives around, and many have fallen victim to the proliferation of opioids in our communities," adds Ballard.

Giles County Administrator Chris McKlarney, who actively joins participants for the Giles County Recovery Court's weekly fitness program, applauded Ballard for his support and sponsorship of the bill.

"We are very appreciative of the efforts of Delegate Ballard to carry this legislation," notes McKlarney. "It is not often that a bill receives unanimous support, which speaks to the bipartisan support for this program and the great work that is being done."

"Delegate Ballard not only carried and worked the bill, but on three occasions toured our Recovery Court participants around Richmond to see various aspects of the political process at work," McKlarney adds.

Ballard points out that the personal testimony provided by some of the participants during their visits to Richmond helped ensure bipartisan support for the name change. Participants, escorted by McKlarney, eventually got to see their efforts pay off first-hand during a May 14 visit to the state capital where they joined Ballard and fellow Delegate



**MAILER WITH A MESSAGE:** This is the front of a mailer that was sent out to households across the New River Valley in April, prior to the most recent "Take Back Day" event. NRVCs sends out a mailer before each of the semi-annual "Take Back Day" events to help remind residents of the opportunity to safely dispose their expired or unused medications. (Graphic - R. Wilsie/NRVCs)

## NRV Take Back Day events hit milestone; Over 5,000 pounds collected since 2022

By Mike Wade / NRVCs  
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If the weight of an average pill is 0.5 grams, the combined Take Back Day collections from across the New River Valley since October 2022 would equate to more than 4.5 million pills.

Law enforcement agencies across the region participate in a national event that is held twice each year that is organized by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). New River Valley officials collected a total of 987.6 pounds this past April, bringing the combined total collected since October 2022 to more than 5,000 pounds.

October 2022 is when New River Valley Community Services began utilizing a portion of its State Opioid Response (SOR) funds to produce a promotional mailer that is sent out to homes across the New River Valley in

advance of each Take Back Day event. The mailer is one component of the agency's ongoing #EndOverdoseNRV campaign, which focuses on overdose prevention and opioid awareness.

Take Back Day is designed to reduce the potential for medication misuse and opioid addiction by providing community members with a safe way to properly rid their homes of prescription drugs that are expired or no longer needed. Given that the United States saw more than 107,000 overdose deaths last year, supply reduction efforts like this are vital to community health and public safety.

In addition to these events, NRVCs has also funded permanent dropboxes at police departments in Dublin, Pearisburg, and Radford, as well as several local pharmacies.

Mark your calendars now for the next Take Back Day event, which will take place Saturday, October 26, 2024.



**SUPPORTING JURORS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY:** Tiffany M. Couch, (left) Circuit Court Clerk for Montgomery County, poses for a photo with NRVCS' Erin Brosius at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Christiansburg. (Photo - R. Wilsie/NRVCS)

## Montgomery County Circuit Court Clerk partners with NRVCS to offer post-trial resources for jurors

Tiffany M. Couch, Circuit Court Clerk for Montgomery County, has partnered with New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) to provide post-trial resources and a free one-time initial consultation for jurors.

"We are excited to partner with the Montgomery County Circuit Court Clerk's office to provide post-trial support, consultation, and resources for jurors," notes Erin Brosius, Outpatient Program Director at NRVCS. "Being exposed to traumatic images and details may cause significant anxiety, stress, and vicarious trauma."

"Our goal is to ease the anxiety, stress, and potential guilt individuals may feel following a trial by offering jurors the opportunity to speak with a mental health professional in a safe environment," Brosius adds.

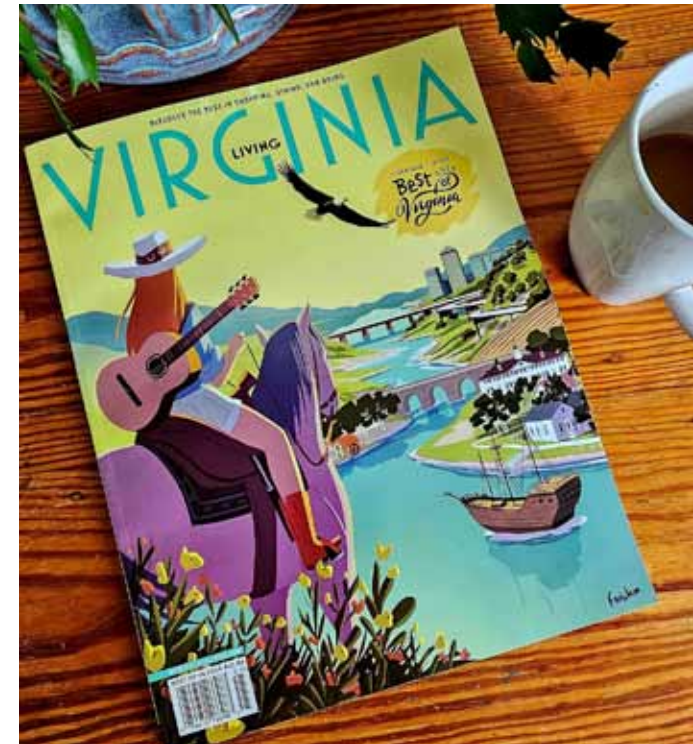
According to the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), there are an estimated 11 million individuals reporting for jury service every year. The COSCA's new policy paper, *Citizens on Call: Responding to*

*the Needs of 21st Century Jurors*, reinforces the importance of jury service, as well as urging courts to improve the treatment of jurors. According to Couch, this paper offers various recommendations and strategies, one of which takes into consideration the continued stress that may result from performing jury service.

"When I heard about the Jury Trauma Program in Rockingham County Circuit Court from their Clerk, Chaz W. Haywood, I knew Montgomery County Jurors deserve the same resource" says Couch.

"Jurors perform a critical role in the cornerstone of justice in Montgomery County. They are an integral part of the judicial system. Jurors personally sacrifice time away from work, family, and other commitments," she adds. "I commend them for their undivided attention and dedication to each case in which they hear."

I am pleased to offer this new post-trial resource by partnering with NRVCS, providing this will help them process the testimony they hear."



## NRVCS again named top provider in "Best of Virginia" publication

By Mike Wade / NRVCS  
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New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) was recently named the number one counseling or therapy practice in the Southwest Virginia region, based on voting in *Virginia Living's* Annual "Best of Virginia" Readers' Survey. This is the second consecutive year that NRVCS has earned the top ranking in this category.

According to publishers, readers across the Commonwealth submitted votes via the survey. Southwest Virginia is among five different regions included in the voting, along with the Shenandoah Valley, Central Virginia, Eastern Virginia, and Northern Virginia. "Counseling or Therapy Practice" was one of the categories included in health services. The survey also provided readers an opportunity to select favorite restaurants, shopping, and recreational opportunities. The publication lists first, second, and third place winners for similar categories in each of the five regions.

"The nature of the work we do is challenging, so it's always great when we are recognized for doing it well," says James Pritchett, NRVCS Executive Director. "Being voted the region's top provider for the second year in a row speaks to the fact that our agency is very intentional in striving to maintain the highest quality of services possible."

*Virginia Living's* "Best of Virginia" 2024 issue is now available. To learn more, visit [virginaliving.com](http://virginaliving.com).

## Recovery Court

From Page 8

Chris Obenshain to witness Governor Glenn Youngkin sign the bill into law.

"I'm incredibly proud of these participants for their dedication, and I'm thankful that the House, Senate, and Governor Youngkin all agreed that this positive bill should become law," continues Ballard.

"I also want to thank Giles County Administrator Chris McKlarney, who accompanied the group on their trips to Richmond and has also been a large part in getting this accomplished," Ballard adds.

"For our participants to have the opportunity to help develop a bill, and then to testify to in the House Chambers and eventually stand in the Governor's office while he signed the bill, will be something that they will never forget," shares McKlarney.

"Governor Youngkin's genuine kindness and heartfelt support was evident, and he was very gracious with his time," he adds. "This was a once in a lifetime opportunity for our participants and they shined when testifying before the House. We are very proud of them for helping to raise awareness of this very important program."

**Be Here Tomorrow**  
An Evening with Kevin Hines

**Tuesday, September 17, 2024 @ 7 PM**  
New River Community College  
Dublin campus | Edwards Hall

*A Suicide Prevention Awareness Event*  
Sponsored by New River Valley Community Services

# HOPEHUB

## FREE NRV RESOURCE APP



### About the App

HopeHub connects New River Valley residents with local resources in one easy-to-use app. Whether you need help with food and housing, mental health and addiction services, or other supports, you'll find resource details, contact information, and even driving directions – all at your fingertips.

