Category: Florence Hall Award
Nominee: **USU Extension HEART Initiative:** Timothy Keady, MS, CHES®; Gabriela Murza, MS, MCHES®; Rachel Myrer, MPH, CPH, CHES®; Mateja Savoie-Roskos, Ph.D., MPH, RD; Maren Wright Voss, ScD; and Ashley Yaugher, Ph.D.
Nominator: Dr. Ashley Yaugher, USU Extension HEART Faculty, ashley.yaugher@usu.edu

Program Description: Despite our relatively small population, Utah ranks among the top three states most affected by the opioid crisis (Scholl et al., 2019). The rate of opioid overdose in Utah has consistently been higher than the national rate, and over 60% of these opioid-related deaths are due to prescription opioids (UDOH, n.d.). Due to these increased rates, deaths due to opioid overdose now claim more lives than firearms, falls, and motor vehicle accidents (UDOH, n.d.). Certain counties throughout the state are especially impacted by the opioid crisis, with some counties experiencing double or triple rates of opioid-related mortality (UDOH, 2019). To address this emerging and persistent issue, Utah State University Extension created the Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, & Teaching (HEART) Initiative in July 2018. The HEART Initiative is an innovative, cutting-edge program consisting of five multidisciplinary faculty strategically stationed within the nine Utah counties hardest hit by the opioid crisis: Carbon, Emery, Utah, Salt Lake, Tooele, Davis, Weber, Cache, and Box Elder, and one team evaluator. Utilizing their diverse range of backgrounds, the team works with a common goal of implementing evidence-based programming to reduce opioid-related harms and promote the overall health and wellbeing of Utah residents.

HEART prioritizes national and local collaboration, deliberately utilizing a community participatory action framework to establish the Initiative's objectives and guide efforts. HEART's objectives are to: 1) Offer prevention and education through collaboration with local community organization, 2) Reduce stigma and harm felt by diverse people with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) through the promotion of recovery and evidenced-based programming, 3) Form

stronger community ties through collaboration, and 4) Build resilience through evidence-based programming. At its core, HEART values community-led efforts and strives to build partnerships between national, state, and local organizations and community members to build knowledge and improve lives. We seek to produce and use educational materials and innovative programming to increase the understanding and acceptance between those who have lived experience of OUD and those who do not.

New Concerns and Emerging Issues: HEART's audience serves both adults and youth, including individuals in the recovery community to ensure comprehensive programming, addressing universal prevention as well as targeted intervention to address local needs. HEART strives to include our audience in the development and implementation of programming, continually utilizing a community participatory approach to hear the needs of our communities and effectively serve our audience. Our audience includes all Utah residents, with a special focus on the nine counties hardest hit by the opioid crisis. These nine counties are a combination of urban, densely populated cities and rural, underserved communities (e.g., tribal, recovery, low income, veteran, etc.). We strive to serve the diverse interests of each of these communities, conducting needs assessments to bring much needed resources to these areas and ensuring we are serving the health and wellness needs continuously. Through these needs assessments and continued collaborations with community partners, HEART identifies and addresses other pressing public health issues including mental and emotional health, suicide prevention, substance use prevention, and more. HEART seeks to address these needs through coordination of on-the-ground efforts that advance evidence-based information, community-based solutions, and multi-sector partnerships.

Resources Involved: The HEART team continually establishes and participates in numerous local and state organizations. These partners are frequently involved in the planning, development, and implementation of needed resources and programming. These organizations include local substance use and mental health coalitions and organizations, local substance abuse authorities, health care providers and organizations, local and state health departments, universities, recovery centers, and more. To date, we have added and contributed on over 51 community coalitions in our local networks, maximizing impacts, increasing our reach, and ensuring sustainability. In manifestation of these efforts, one member of a community coalition said that HEART, "seems to be generating hope and direction for all our individual efforts." Substantial additional funds have also been secured to continue to offer and create innovative programming. Over $6.8 million in state and federal funding and nearly $150,000 in internal funding has been secured for these efforts.

Accomplishments: The HEART team overall has been extremely impactful within its first two years of operation. One focus of the HEART team has been producing education and awareness materials. To date, the Initiative has published 45 newspaper articles, 20 peer-reviewed journal articles, 14 peer-reviewed fact sheets, 25 other publications, and have been featured on 16 websites. These publications have been viewed and downloaded numerous times, locally, nationally, and internationally. The HEART team has also created a monthly newsletter to provide additional resources and information to subscribers. In feedback received by readers, respondents noted that the newsletter, "point[s] me to resources that are good to share with my coworkers and community." When asked how the newsletter been beneficial, one responder stated, "It has kept the community abreast to the ongoing efforts and provided multiple opportunities to learn."

Creating new and innovative programming is essential to the core work. The team has successfully implemented 28 community opioid programs and has held 88 one-time educational events. Crucial to stigma reduction and comprehensive opioid programming are harm-reduction services and programs. HEART continues to support evidence-based programming such as educating on and distributing Naloxone, a life-saving medication used to reverse an opioid overdose. In collaboration with community partnerships, 855 Narcan kits have been distributed and 1,456 individuals have been trained on its use. HEART collaboratively developed "Informing the National Narrative: Stories of Utah's Opioid Crisis," an extensive digital collection documenting the diverse stories of Utahn's first hand experiences with OUD, available for free online. From this collection, additional community events (titled "Community Conversations") were held in each county to discuss, connect, and reflect on the opioid crisis and its impacts throughout each community. This project serves to validate marginalized people, give voices to their experiences, reduce stigma, and promote health and healing in our communities. Key to the work is participating in and contributing to the overall field of substance use and mental health. The HEART team has attended 135 conferences and professional events and provided 31 presentations. These local, state, and national presentations and conferences have added to our existing collaborative network, increased awareness and reach of the Initiative and its work, and created impacts among participants. These efforts have reached and impacted hundreds and thousands of Utah residents.

Future Implications: HEART strives to create sustainable relationships and programming to continue to provide resources to our communities now and in the future. We seek to continue our collaborations with community prevention coalitions, state and local health departments, local substance abuse authorities, Veterans Affairs, law enforcement and first

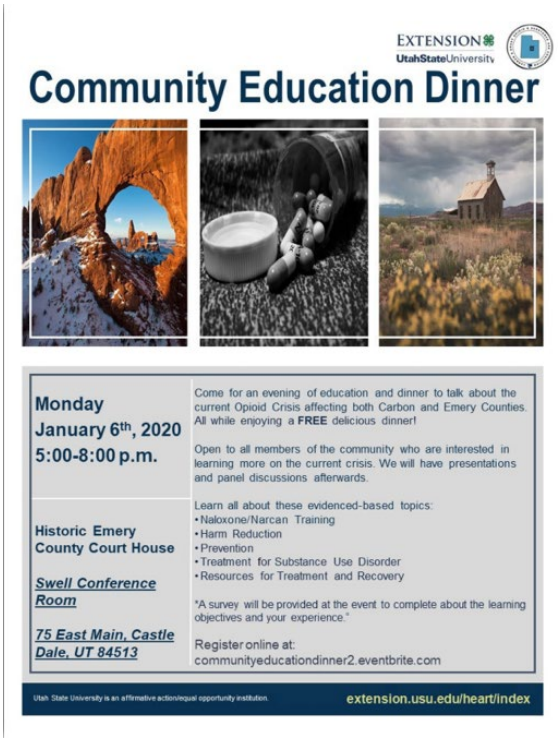
responders, and others to comprehensively address the opioid crisis. The HEART Initiative serves as a model for how Extension can join community partners to better address the health and wellness needs in our state. This model, aligned with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS, 2018) agency's Five-Point Strategy to combat the opioid crisis (CDC, 2018), is one that can be replicated in other communities. The four objective approach used to guide the work of HEART has proven effect, focusing on key areas identified by community members and key stakeholders. The unique academic resources that HEART brings to the community has resulted in significant impacts throughout our communities. The HEART team continues to look for opportunities to collaborate and create programming for substance use and opioid prevention, current users, individuals in recovery, treatment providers, family members and more. Members of the HEART team are currently pursuing action to address additional populations and concerns such as youth and vaping, adding individuals in recovery to treatment teams, and more.

Other Extension Programs Conducted: In addition to programming provided within its four pillars, the HEART team hosted or assisted in numerous additional trainings, outreach, services, and programs to communities throughout the state. One service, the Health Rocks 4-H club provided trainings and events where 1,033 adults and youth attended. HEART faculty also facilitated virtual sessions of the pain management course Living Well with Chronic Pain where 85 participants received 430 hours of pain education and support. To review additional programming and impact, refer to our Impact Documents.

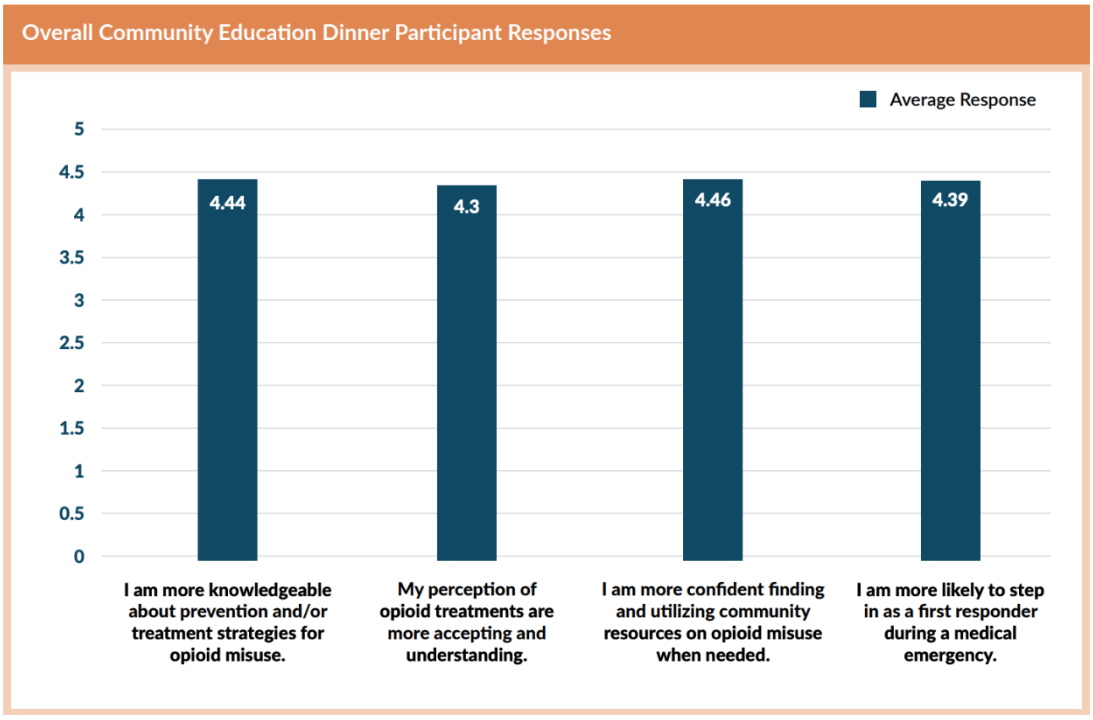
References available upon request.

Supplemental Materials

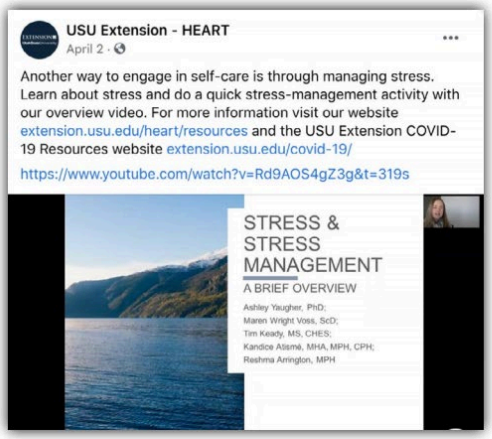
To view all Impact Documents and Programming Events, refer to our [Impacts Webpage]



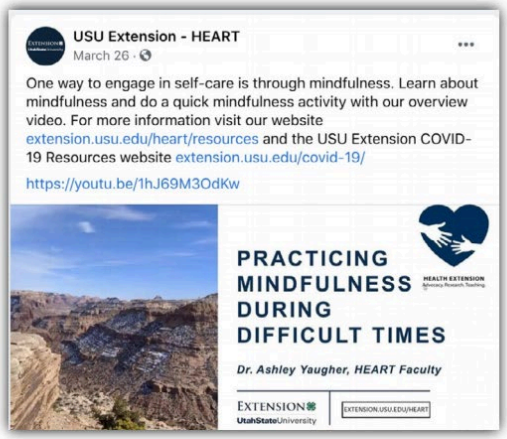
Community education dinner event flyer



Evaluation from Community Education Dinner event held in Carbon & Emery counties. To view an online recording of the event or view event materials, visit our webpage.



USU Extension – HEART Facebook post on How to Understand and Manage Stress, Video



USU Extension – HEART Facebook post on Practicing Mindfulness During Difficult Times, Video

1. Stress & Stress Management
176 views, 4 Likes, 6 Shares

2. Practicing Mindfulness
262 Views, 16 Likes, 11 Shares

Virtual short courses were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are two of these courses that were posted on Facebook.

Substance Use Disorder Stigma Factsheet

Mindfulness for Chronic Pain Management

Exercise Tips for Chronic Pain Management

Anxiety and Depression: Can Diet Help?

Samples of peer-reviewed fact sheets written by HEART. To view these and other fact sheets, view our [Research Webpage](#).

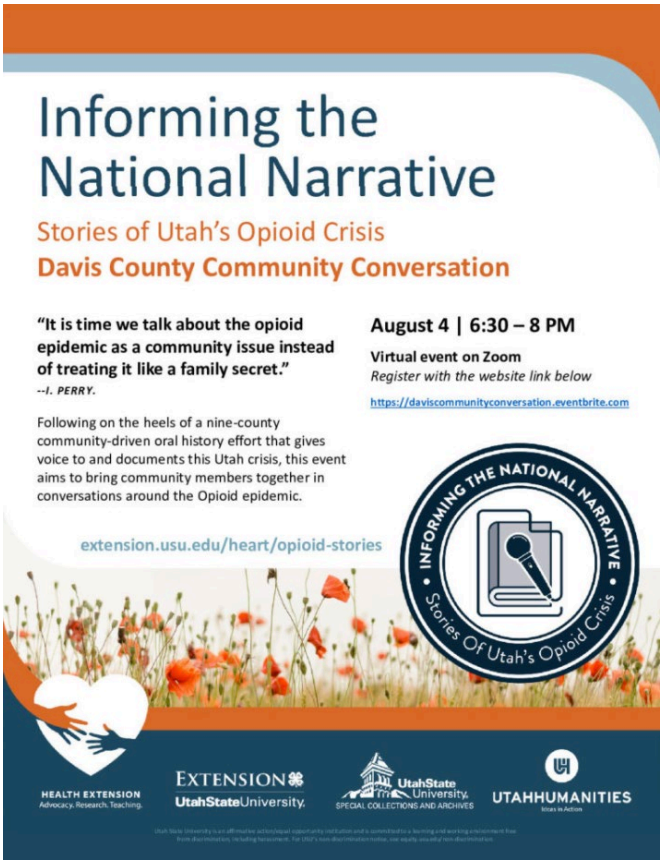
Informing the National Narrative: Stories of Utah's Opioid Crisis

All Nine HEART Counties

Interview set-up for the first Opioid Stories Interview

Interview kits for the Opioid Stories Project

A total of 30 interviews were held throughout the state and the audio recordings and transcripts are available here.



Community Conversation event flyer for events based off of the Informing the National Narrative: Stories of Utah's Opioid Crisis project

EXTENSION
UtahStateUniversity

Office of the Vice President

January 28, 2021

Dear Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support on behalf of the HEART Initiative for the NEAFCS Florence Hall and Innovation in Programming Awards. Utah State University Extension strives to provide evidence-based programs and resources to improve the lives of Utah residents. Due to the complexity of emerging and critical issues faced today, we strive to respond to these needs through teaching, research, and public service. Often, this entails creating additional programming to adequately address these diverse, multi-faceted issues. In 2018, the Utah State University Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, & Teaching Initiative (HEART) was created to address the health and wellness needs in Utah, specifically the opioid crisis.

HEART is a cutting-edge, 4-year pilot program aligned with National Cooperative Extension's essential focus on health and wellness. HEART serves as a model of how Extension can join community partners, coordinating on-the-ground efforts that advance community-based solutions to better address the health and wellness needs in our state, such as the opioid crisis. HEART brings unique academic resources into the community, strategically integrating within our communities to provide resources and evidence-based programming. With the diverse backgrounds of this five faculty-member team, numerous relationships with organizations in our communities have been established which have resulted in successful events and partnerships producing positive impacts during the initiative's first two years.

Over the last two and a half years, the HEART team has conducted several successful programs and events aimed at providing information and resources pertaining to the current opioid crisis. These programs include free community education dinner events and workshop series such as Living Well with Chronic Pain, The Carbon & Emery Opioid & Substance Use Coalition, monthly educational video series and short courses, and many more. In addition, HEART team members implemented 116 different opioid-focused and wellness programs and events, distributing harm-reduction education (including 855 Narcan kits) and conducting essential trainings. HEART has authored and published 130 journal articles, peer-reviewed Extension factsheets, newspaper articles, and other publications. Collectively, HEART brought in over $6.8 million in state, federal, and internal funding through collaborative partnerships to support local prevention and treatment programming.

At Utah State University, our mission of building knowledge and improving lives is paramount, as is servicing the state with identified needs such as opioid harm reduction. We are proud of the impacts the HEART team is having in Utah communities and excited about the future and continuing these life-saving efforts. I strongly recommend the HEART Initiative for these

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NEAFCS awards and feel that they are very deserving given their range of impacts and accomplishments in their two and a half years of operation. I have no doubt that they will continue these efforts to improve wellness across the state and reduce the widespread and devasting impacts from the opioid crisis we are experiencing.

Sincerely,

Kenneth L. White
Vice President for Extension