



# **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS**

## **DRUG AWARENESS CONFERENCE**

**Strength in Partnership: Communities United for Prevention, Treatment and Recovery. Together We Make A Difference**



**MARCH**  
**12-13**  
**2026**

**STUDENT**  
**CENTER**  
1255 Lincoln Drive  
Carbondale, IL 62901

**EVENTS AND OUTREACH**  
**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE**

# SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

## DRUG AWARENESS CONFERENCE

Welcome to the **Southern Illinois Drug Awareness Conference!**

On behalf of the planning committee, we are honored to have you join us for this pivotal event. Over the next two days, we will delve into the pressing issues of substance use, mental health, and homelessness that impact our community. Our goal is to foster collaboration among professionals from various sectors, including law enforcement, healthcare, education, and social services, to develop comprehensive strategies that address these challenges.

We have curated a diverse program featuring esteemed speakers, interactive workshops, and insightful panel discussions. We encourage you to actively participate, share your experiences, and engage with fellow attendees. Together, we can drive meaningful change and strengthen the well-being of Southern Illinois.

Thank you for your commitment to this cause. We look forward to a productive and inspiring conference.

Warm regards,

SIDAC Planning Committee,

Aaron Morehead  
Andy Greer  
Brandon Grzechowiak  
Christy Richardson  
Dria Markel  
Jeff Watkins  
Lisa Gulley  
Michelle Hamilton  
Sarah Basler  
Shyla Hernandez

Aaron Seibert  
Annette Miner  
Breanne Pleggenkuhle  
Diana Shields  
Holly Windhorst  
Jenee' Westjohn-Meyers  
Lisa Smith  
Mike Tyson  
Scotty Bollman  
Wes Harbison

Amber Bridgman  
Bradley Bullock  
Brent VanHam  
Dona Howell  
Jackie Welch  
Lindsay Powell  
Mandy Hagen  
Richard Kulich  
Shara Robinson  
William Lo

# SIDAC Committee would like to thank the 2026 Conference Sponsors:

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**Rural Health & Social Service Development**

**Southern Illinois Healthcare**

**Shawnee Health**

**SIU School of Medicine Center for Rural Health**

**SI Resource and Advocacy Center**

**Star Behavioral Health Providers**

**Survivor Empowerment Center**

**Take Action Today**

**WestCare**

## Continuing Education Unit Hours

CEU credits will be available for each session. As follows:

1. Plenary sessions, please sign in electronically using the provided QR Code in your folder.
2. Breakout sessions, a sign-in/sign-out sheet will be provided in each room. To receive credit, ensure you sign in and out for every breakout session you attend.

When signing in, please be sure your email address and license number are listed by your name. Certificates will be emailed .

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- ◆ Illinois Certification Board has approved **14 hours**
  - ◆ SIU Medicine, Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development has approved **CEUs for LCSW, LCPC, LSW, and LPC**
    - ⇒ Both days—11 ceus
    - ⇒ One day—5.5 ceus
  - The Illinois Education Association will be offering Professional Development Hours (PDHs) to licensed educators for qualifying sessions. If you are interested in receiving PD Hours, please ensure that you sign in and out of every session you attend and contact Jackie Welch (jackiew@siu.edu) for more information.





# SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

## DRUG AWARENESS CONFERENCE

**THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026**

**7:00 AM-8:25 AM**

**Registration**

After you check-in at the registration table, please visit our vendors in the International Lounge. (map in conference folder)

**8:25 AM**

**Welcome**

**Speaker:** Dean Robert Morgan, College of Health and Human Sciences, SIU Carbondale

**8:30 AM-9:30 AM**

**Plenary I**

### ***Drug Trends***

Illicit drugs, how they are used, manufactured and transported is constantly evolving. This presentation will help educate attendees on current trends and what to look for in the field.

**Speaker:** **Master Sergeant Wm. Brant Blackburn**, currently assigned to the Division of Criminal Investigation, began his career with the Illinois State Police (iSP) in 2002. Brant has been in investigations since 2006, having worked in human trafficking, narcotics enforcement, and Major Crimes during various times throughout his career.

**9:30 AM - 10:30 AM**

**Plenary II**

### ***Human Trafficking***

In 2022, the Illinois State Police (ISP) created the Trafficking Enforcement Bureau to address the growing need for enforcement related to human trafficking across Illinois. This presentation brings attention to trafficking and educates attendees on recognizing the signs and law enforcements role in helping victims.

**Speakers:** **ISP Lieutenant Brandon Grzechowiak** currently assigned to the Division of Criminal Investigation, began his career with the ISP in 2004. Brandon has been in investigations since 2006, having worked in human trafficking, narcotics enforcement and Major Crimes during various times throughout his career.

**Special Agent Wes Harbison** began his local law enforcement career in 2006 and onboarded with the ISP in 2020. Agent Harbison's career has included narcotics enforcement and current assignment is with the Trafficking Enforcement Group. Harbison is a Marine Corp vet, husband and father of two.

**10:30 AM – 10:45 AM**

**Break**

**10:45 AM – 11:45 AM**

**Breakout Sessions 1**

**AA1:            *A Canary In A Coal Mine: Addressing Trauma in Recovery Part 1***

In Part I of this presentation, you will learn the diagnostic criteria of five varieties of traumatic stress disorders which co-occur with substance use disorder and impact recovery in unaddressed, including: Acute Stress Disorder, PTSD, Complex trauma, historical trauma and 24-7-365 terror. Emphasis will be placed upon the role of clinicians and recovery support specialists in trauma informed systems of care.

**Speaker:**     **Mark Sanders**, LCSW, CADAC, is an international speaker whose presentations have reached thousands throughout the United States, England, Canada, Spain, Africa, Lithuania, West Indies and Guam. He is the author of five books and recipient of five behavioral health lifetime achievement awards.

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**AA2:            *Into the Abyss***

Resiliency is a hot button word of our current time. Despite the frequent use (perhaps overuse!) of the word we continue to struggle in properly addressing or emphasizing the importance of it within our workforce. *Into the Abyss* is a thought-provoking testimonial. The instructor dives deep into his own experiences in critical incidents and criminal investigative case work to illustrate the sneaky stress building from the moment you begin traveling along your chosen career path, whatever it may be, and compounding along the way. Left unchecked, the compounding stress can manifest in all sorts of unhealthy ways! This module will leave you with an awareness and perhaps even a thing or two to combat the stress you have faced, or certainly will face, along your path. Awareness is key! Join us as you take your first step toward a healthier approach to your career.

**Speaker:**     **ISP Major Jonathan Edwards** began his career with the Illinois State Police (ISP) in 2005 as Trooper assigned to District 12/Troop 9 (Effingham) Patrol. During his time in patrol, Jonathan was assigned to the Special Enforcement Team primarily focusing on interstate narcotics interdiction and impaired driving. In 2008, Jonathan was assigned to Zone 7 Investigations as a Special Agent and has served as a Special Agent in MRT, Major Crimes / Violent Crime Investigations, and the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force (SIDTF). He has served as a supervisor in Major Crimes/Violent Crime, MRT, and Narcotics. Additionally, Jonathan served as the District 4 Commander for the Child Death Investigative Task Force and as the Commander of the SIDTF. Jonathan has served as the Chief of Staff for the Division of Forensic Services (DFS) and the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) under three different Deputy Directors. In January 2024, he was promoted to Major, overseeing the DCI Support Command including the Special Operations Command (SWAT, Air Operations, Statewide Weapons of Mass Destruction Team), the Investigative Support Command, the Firearms Enforcement Command, the Intelligence Command, the Special Investigations Unit, and the Gaming/Financial Crimes Command. Jonathan currently serves as the Great Lakes Regional Director for the National Narcotics Officers Associations Coalition (NNOAC), on the Board of

Directors for the Illinois State Police Command Officers Association, the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies (ASCIA) Human Trafficking Committee, and the Illinois Drug Enforcement Officers Association, has served as a member of the Executive Board for the Illinois MEG Directors and Task Force Commanders Association, the Illinois Tactical Officers Association, and the Illinois Crisis Negotiators Association. Jonathan has also represented the Illinois State Police in the National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies (NASDEA) and has served on the advisory board for the Franklin-Williamson Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

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**AA3:        *Treating the Whole Person - The Benefits of Integrated Care***

Integrated care treats the whole person addressing substance use, mental health and primary care issues. We will discuss implementation, outcomes, and how to treat the whole person.

**Speakers:**    **Stacy Seitz** is a VP of Clinical Services at Centerstone overseeing the addiction treatment continuum.

**Jessica Harrocks** is an outpatient mental health counselor specializing in dual diagnosis disorders at Centerstone's Fellowship House Campus

**Melanie Russell** is the Clinical Manager of Residential Treatment at Centerstone

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**AA4:        *Kratom: Use, Abuse, and Forging a Path Forward***

This lecture will discuss the rising abuse of kratom, and ways to enact laws to ban sale of kratom within our communities.

**Speakers:**    **Dr. Michael Blain** is a Board-Certified Addiction Medicine Specialist who has long championed substance abuse treatment modalities within our communities. He is Medical Director for TASC, and Jefferson County Comprehensive Services providing detox and residential treatment. He is also Medical Director for Egyptian Health Dept, and the Chief Medical Officer of Christopher Rural Health Planning Corporation.

**Sarah Foster** is a Year 2 Medical Student from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. She is interested in becoming an Emergency and Family Medicine Physician. She is actively involved as the Community Outreach Chair for the Addiction Medicine Interest Group. She is currently involved in kratom research through SIU, and hopes to bring improved awareness and physician education to our communities.

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**AA5:        *Mental Health Advocates - Mental Health and Substance Misuse What We Do and Scenarios and Scenes***

The Mental Health Advocate Program is a community-based initiative established to deliver compassionate, evidence-informed support to individuals experiencing mental health or

substance use crises. The program seeks to address systemic gaps among families, community stakeholders, treatment providers, and law enforcement, thereby promoting continuity of care, safety, and the preservation of individual dignity. The presentation will provide a historical overview and an analysis of programmatic data to inform community stakeholders. Advocates facilitate evaluations at treatment centers, provide support to clients navigating judicial processes, coordinate placement and transportation to appropriate facilities, and connect individuals to ongoing services that foster stability and recovery. The presentation will delineate the circumstances warranting team involvement, such as imminent risk to self or others, crises exceeding familial or community capacity, or when external agencies require specialized assistance in crisis management. The training component will utilize case examples to illustrate interagency collaboration during crisis intervention, and will underscore the importance of follow-up care, family engagement, and the cultivation of trust-based client relationships.

**Speakers:** **Theodore Lattan** is a Sergeant with the Carbondale Police Department.

**Randy Mathis** is a Community Resource Officer with the Carbondale Police Dept.

**Dr. Laterriea Martin** is a social work scholar and advocate focused on improving mental health crisis response. She connects research, practice, and community leadership to promote justice, healing, and empowerment for vulnerable populations. Her work supports innovative, community-based solutions for safer, more compassionate systems.

**Bryan Tucker** is a Mental Health Advocate for the Carbondale Police Department. He has been in the field for approximately 10 years and has been working specifically in crisis intervention for the past two years. Bryan is passionate about helping people in need and providing support during difficult times.

**Jaz Katz** has a passion for mental health and serving the underserved populations. She is especially passionate about looking at co-occurring disorders and the effect they have on every day life for individuals.

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**AA6:** ***Unidos en Acción: Advancing Culturally Responsive Substance-Use Supports in Southern Illinois***

Southern Illinois' Hispanic/Latino communities are growing, yet their unique prevention, treatment, and recovery needs often remain overlooked, limiting access, trust, and long-term engagement. This workshop explores the urgent need to integrate culturally responsive practices into substance-use services across the prevention-to-recovery continuum. Grounded in equity, partnership, and the 2026 SIDAC theme, this session offers tools for creating inclusive systems where Hispanic/Latino individuals and families receive meaningful, trauma-informed, and culturally congruent support. Together, we can build stronger pathways to prevention, treatment, and lasting recovery for all.

**Speaker:** **Cristina Castillo**, M.S. in Educational Psychology, serves as Program Coordinator for the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development. A culturally grounded educator and advocate, she partners with community organizations to address the lack of resources in behavioral-health affecting Hispanic/Latino communities in S. IL.

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**AA7:** ***Addressing Barriers to Palliative Care for Patient's with Substance Use Disorders***

Barriers to providing effective palliative care for patients with substance use disorders are complex and multi-faceted, encompassing provider-related, patient-related, and systemic issues. A program designed to address these challenges.

**Speaker:** **Tara Hartley**, LCSW CADC graduated from SIUC in 2016. Tara has experience in mental health therapy and substance use disorders in which she worked at Centerstone and Gateway prior to her current position at SIH. Tara has worked in Palliative Care at SIH for 6 years where she has had experienced how substance use disorders have affected her patients and their families in end of life care.

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**AA8:** ***Addictions and Veteran Care***

An exploration of Addictions treatment options for Veterans in the context of a rural, integrated care setting with a focus on advantages and barriers inherent to this population and treatment needs that Veterans in the Southern Illinois area have at their disposal, both locally and in the broader VA healthcare system.

**Speakers:** **Aaron Morehead**, LCSW, CADC, is a Southern Illinois native. He has worked in the field of Addictions since 2012 in both community agency roles and now as the coordinator and a therapist for the Marion VAMC's Addictions Treatment Program.

**Quest Nelson**, CPSS, was raised in Southern Illinois and a US Navy Veteran, Quest has worked for Behavioral Health at the Marion VA since 2010. He serves his fellow Veterans as a Peer Specialist, assigned to the Marion VAMC's RRTP.

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**AA9:** ***Meth 101***

Meth has been around since it was first synthesized in 1893 and has constantly evolved. This presentation will help educate attendees on current trends and what to look for in the field.

**Speaker:** **ISP Master Sergeant Wm. Brant Blackburn** currently assigned to the Division of Criminal investigation, began his career with ISP in 2002. Brant has been in investigations since 2006, having worked in human trafficking, narcotics enforcement, and Major Crimes during various times throughout his career.

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**AA10:        *Cannabis Policy and Prevention***

This workshop will examine the landscape of cannabis policy in Illinois since legalization and discuss how youth cannabis access and use has been impacted by regulation and suggest solutions.

**Speaker:**    **Jake Levinson** is the Administrator of Prevention First’s Cannabis Policy Resource Center, working to assist municipalities, coalitions, and law enforcement in using cannabis policy as a prevention tool.

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**AA11:        *Women on Probation***

This session will explore the complexities of women supervised on probation, how they differ from men on probation, and how to address their specific needs.

**Speaker:**    **Jenee’ Westjohn-Meyers** has been employed at the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts since 2024. She currently holds a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice Policy from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

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**AA12:        *Conditioned to Survive: Understanding Trauma-Driven Inaction in Unhoused Populations***

Learned helplessness is often misunderstood as apathy or “lack of motivation,” particularly in rural unhoused populations surviving extreme instability. This session examines the trauma mechanisms behind shutdown responses and offers practical tools for service providers to reduce barriers, build autonomy, and improve outcomes.

**Speaker:**    **Megan Ragan**, LCSW, is the Executive Director of the Southern Illinois Resource and Advocacy Center. Megan has over a decade of experience working in southern Illinois child and family serving systems.

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**AA13:        *Substance Use in the Military: Assessing Impact, Readiness, and Resources***

This presentation will address key policies, challenges, and best practices in managing substance use disorders in the Active Duty and Reserve Components of the military, focusing on fitness for duty implications, triaging, assessment, and treatment, as well as current trends.

**Speaker:**    **Jennifer Nevers**, MSW, LCSW, is the Subject Matter Expert Office Lead at the Center for Deployment Psychology, Jennifer supports the Star Behavioral Health Providers program in training civilian behavioral health providers on military culture and military-related behavioral health concerns to improve access to care for military-connected individuals and families.

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- BB6: Unidos en *Acción*: Advancing Culturally Responsive Substance-Use Support in Southern Illinois**  
*Speaker:* Cristina Castillo
- BB7: Addressing Barriers to Palliative Care For Patients with Substance-Use Disorders**  
*Speaker:* Tara Hartley
- BB8: Addictions and Veteran Care**  
*Speakers:* Aaron Morehead and Quest Nelson
- BB9: Meth 101**  
*Speaker:* ISP Master Sergeant Brant Blackburn
- BB10: Cannabis Policy and Prevention**  
*Speaker:* Jake Levinson
- BB11: Women on Probation**  
*Speaker:* Jenee' Westjohn-Meyers
- BB12: Conditioned to Survive: Understanding Trauma-Driven Inaction in Unhoused Populations**  
*Speaker:* Megan Ragan
- BB13: Substance Use in the Military: Assessing Impact, Readiness, and Resources**  
*Speaker:* Jennifer Nevers
- BB14: Opioid and Overdose Epidemic**  
*Speaker:* Brian Van Ham

**2:15 – 2:30 PM Break**

**2:30 – 4:00 PM Plenary III**

***Finding Solid Ground: Personal Journeys From Housing Instability to Recovery***

Join peer recovery specialists and community advocates sharing authentic stories of overcoming homelessness. This powerful discussion highlights resilience, recovery pathways, and the strength found in lived experience, offering hope and practical insights for sustainable transformation.

**Speaker:** **Mike Tyson** is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and the Director of Recovery Support Services at the Southern Illinois Resource and Advocacy Center. He is a statewide leader and advocate for peer based services and recovery oriented systems.



## **FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026**

**8:30 AM – 9:30 AM**

**Plenary IV**

### ***From Enforcement to Engagement: Illinois' Deflection Model and State Police Collaboration***

Discover how Illinois is transforming public safety through deflection—an innovative, collaborative approach that connects individuals to services instead of arrest. This session highlights the state's comprehensive deflection initiatives and the vital partnerships driving them, including the Illinois State Police, behavioral health systems, and community providers working together to reduce justice system involvement and build healthier, safer communities.

**Speakers:** **Koren VanderWeele** is a Senior Program Manager for TASC's Center for Health and Justice, Koren serves as the lead of deflection initiatives to jurisdictions in Illinois, providing training and technical assistance (TTA) on their planning and implementation.

**Brandon Grzechowiak** has been a police officer for 23 years. With the Illinois State Police for 20 years, 18 years in investigations. 17 years in narcotics as an Agent and supervisor. Currently assigned as a Lieutenant in the ISP Trafficking Enforcement Bureau.

**9:30 – 9:45 AM**

**Break**

**9:45 AM – 10:45 AM**

**Breakout Sessions 3**

### **CC1: *A Canary In A Coal Mine: Addressing Trauma in Recovery Part 1***

In Part I of this presentation, you will learn the diagnostic criteria of 5 varieties of traumatic stress disorders which co-occur with substance use disorder and impact recovery in unaddressed, including: Acute Stress Disorder, PTSD, Complex trauma, historical trauma and 24-7-365 terror. Emphasis will be placed upon the role of clinicians and recovery support specialists in trauma informed systems of care.

**Speaker:** **Mark Sanders, LCSW, CADC**

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### **CC2: *Celebrate Recovery***

This session provides information on a spiritually based 12 Step Recovery Program that is not only for dealing with substance use disorders, but also trauma, mental health concerns, over-eating, over-spending, anger, or anything else that can be considered a hurt, hang-up, or habit.

**Speakers:** **Scott Bollman** has many years of lived experience dealing with his own hurts, hang-ups, and habits. For the past three years, he has been the Celebrate Recovery Leader and Pastor at Purpose House Church

**Dona Howell** has worked in the field of criminal justice and behavioral health counseling for over 40 years. Retired from the Illinois Department of Corrections, she has been active in Celebrate Recovery for the past three.

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**CC3: *Service Dogs and Their Benefits to Mental Health***

Explore the world of service dogs and what goes into their training. Also understanding and navigating the rules and regulations according to the American's with Disabilities Act.

**Speakers:** **Tony Eaton** is a United States Marine and Retired Christopher, IL Police Officer. I started Down the Leash Service Dogs in 2023 to help end veteran and first line responder suicide. Our program has helped well over 60 veterans, first line responders and their families and given away nearly a million dollars worth of dog training in the past three years.

**Doug Hexamer** is a United States Marine and father four. He grew up in southern Illinois. Former law enforcement. He currently serves as board secretary for Down the Leash Service Dogs.

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**CC4: *Lets Talk About It! Systemic Harms in Society and Controversial Issues Harm Related***

Panel of three people to give their personal stories and unique/not so unique perspective on harms/harm reduction in society. Why aren't more people talking about this? These are voices that need to be heard! We will be discussing the Good Samaritan Law, Big Pharma, and the harms of large systems that need to be shut down or changed.

**Speakers:** **Torie Patton**, CPRS, a person with lived experience, mother, person in Recovery who relies on prescription medication to stay in recovery, a harm reduction specialist and a certified peer recovery specialist. she has worked at Take Action Today for 2.5 years. Torie has been off illegal drugs since October 2022, and in recovery since March 2023.

**Valerie Stewart** has spent years of her life enslaved to heroin. She lost countless people to overdose. Her own life has been saved multiple times through the help of others and the life saving medication Naloxone. Eventually Valerie was sentenced to six years in prison for home invasion. This was the beginning of her story of recovery. She has lived in southern Illinois all her life, and is committed to helping people in the community. Valerie hopes to use her own experience with addiction to offer support to others on their path to healing.

**Rachel Tucker** is a woman with lived experience and a testimony shaped by the streets, survival, and the grace of God. She spent a lifetime being homeless, loyal to the only world

she knew-dark corners, cold nights, and the fight to make it through one more day. But in November of 2023, at her breaking point, she cried out to God as her last resort to stay clean and sober. *"In my distress I called to the Lord; He answered me."* -Psalm 120:1; That night, everything changed. Today she stands in recovery-clean, sober, and walking in the purpose God paced over her life. What the enemy meant for destruction, God is now using as a testimony of hope healing and freedom. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here."* -2 Corinthians 5:17; She is now a voice and an advocate for those still battling addiction, mental health struggles, and homelessness. I love the streets-not because of my past, but because God turned them into my ministry. I go back as a beacon of light and hope for the broken, the forgotten, and the ones who feel they have no more chances left. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* -John 1:5; Rachel is a proud graduate of Take Action Today, whose services and support helped carry her through the early, fragile stages of her recovery. Their guidance became a stepping stone to the life she lives today. Her mission is simple and unwavering: to be a voice so those suffering never have to suffer alone. God saved her life, and now she will spend the rest of her days reaching back to the ones still fighting for theirs. *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...defend the rights of the poor and needy."* -Proverbs 31:8-9

**Heather Dale** is a person with lived experience, mother of six, former participant of Take Action Today, a person in recovery and manager of a local retail store. She is happy to have the platform to share her story.

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**CC5: *SIYEN Unplugged: Prevention, But Real***

SIYEN empowers youth through prevention, education, and lived experience—offering adaptable, youth-centered programs that build resilience, promote healthy choices, and support thriving futures in school, life, and community.

**Speakers:** **Tea Ferrell** is the Program Coordinator for the Southern Illinois Youth Empowerment Network (SIYEN), a transformative initiative she created to foster safe, inclusive environments where young people can grow, heal, and realize their full potential. With a background in healthcare and a current pursuit of a Masters degree in Human Services, Tea brings both academic insight and personal resilience to her leadership. As a Person with Lived Experience (PLE), she has transformed adversity into advocacy—channeling her journey into a mission to uplift and empower youth across Southern Illinois.

**Danielle Kroeger** is a Youth Engagement Specialist with the Southern Illinois Youth Empowerment Network (SIYEN), where she helps design and implement programs that support youth development, leadership, and healing. With over 11 years of experience in social work and nine years in grant writing, Danielle has secured vital resources to expand services in underserved communities. Her work is deeply informed by her personal journey through recovery, which fuels her commitment to helping young people recognize their strengths and build resilient futures. Danielle is passionate about creating spaces where youth feel seen, supported, and empowered to thrive.

**Jessica Schultz** is a Youth Engagement Specialist with the Southern Illinois Youth Empowerment Network (SIYEN), where she supports youth through advocacy, mentorship, and lived experience. Currently pursuing her Bachelor's in Social Work at Grand Canyon University, Jessica brings a unique blend of academic focus and personal resilience to her role. Her journey through recovery—following struggles with substance use and mental health rooted in generational trauma—has shaped her commitment to helping young people navigate challenges and build brighter futures.

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**CC6: From Withdrawal to Wellness: A Guide to MAT and Detox Medications**

Researches and medical professionals have aimed to identify treatments for those in active use. We now have the ability to safely treat those with Substance Use Disorders.

**Speaker: Krysten Green** is a Family Nurse Practitioner with The Fellowship House Campus of Centerstone. She has been in Addiction Medicine since 2013, beginning as an RN. Krysten received her Bachelor's of Nursing in 2020 from McKendree University and obtained her Master's of Nursing with a concentration on Family Medicine in 2023.

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**CC7: Intersection of Substance Abuse and Juvenile Court**

Presenter will discuss how substance abuse and other co-occurring issues, such as mental health, homelessness, impact the juvenile court process, both child protection court and delinquency court and the challenges faced in obtaining treatment for these issues for both minors and adults.

**Speaker: Judge Amanda Byassee Gott** presides over juvenile abuse/neglect and delinquency matters in Williamson and Saline counties and presides over order of protection, adoption and conflict family matters in Williamson county. She established the juvenile court action team (JCAT).

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**CC8: "Whole Family" Recovery: Building Family Recovery Capital**

Innovative "whole family" recovery approach developed at SIRAC, focusing on building recovery capital for entire families affected by substance use disorder and related challenges.

**Speaker: Mike Tyson** is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and the Director of Recovery Support Services at the Southern Illinois Resource and Advocacy Center. He is a statewide leader and advocate for peer based services and recovery oriented systems of care. He also holds an MSW in Leadership and Social Change.

**Megan Ragan** is Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the executive director at the Southern Illinois Resource and Advocacy Center where she specializes in community based support services for families negotiating challenges related to poverty in Southern Illinois.

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**CC9: *Problem Solving Courts (PSC101)***

Drug/Veterans Court is a collaborative effort between the criminal justice system and treatment to reduce recidivism so that participants can live a healthy, substance free life, resulting in safer communities.

**Speaker:** **Judge Carey Gill** has served as a Circuit Judge since 2017, serving multiple counties and covering every docket since becoming judge. She has presided over the Williamson County Drug/Veteran’s Court since its inception on March 2019.

**Jeff Watkins** has been a Probation Officer since 1988. He currently serves as both the Director of Probation for the First Judicial Circuit of Illinois and the Problem Solving Court Coordinator for the Williamson County Drug/Veteran’s Court.

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**CC10: *Bridging Gaps in Community Health: Substance Use Challenges in Vulnerable Populations***

Discover how substance use disproportionately affects vulnerable populations and what communities can do to close critical health gaps. This session highlights key risk factors, real-world barriers, and practical strategies for improving prevention, treatment, and support. Join us to learn how collaborative, community-focused approaches can strengthen health equity and better serve those most at risk.

**Speaker:** **Carrie Vine** (she/her), LCSW, CHW, is currently a Clinical Coordinator with Addiction Services at Centerstone. She is also a Community Health Worker with extensive experience in public health and is actively pursuing her MPH. Throughout her career, Carrie has focused on advocating for health equity for vulnerable populations throughout Southern Illinois.

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**CC11: *Certified Peer Workforce Development***

This presentation will include topics of certified peer workforce development, peer workforce training, and the SIU CRSS Program. Attendees of the presentation will learn about the goals, purpose, and components of certified peer workforce development.

**Speaker:** **Elizabeth Raleigh** is the Program Director at SIU working with the SIU CRSS Program throughout the State of IL. She has held this position for five years and has grown the program to include rural health and current non-credentialed peer employees.

**Bobby Baker** is a Program Coordinator at Southern Illinois University working with the SIU CRSS Program. He has worked with SIU over the past 6 years in various programs including Covid-19 Response, Assisted Outpatient Mental Health Treatment, and Certified Recovery Support Specialist programming and development.

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**CC12:        *A New Life: The Carbondale Gateway Recovery Home Program***

The Carbondale Gateway Recovery Home 90-day program. We will be discussing the different phases of our program and how we provide the resident with the best opportunity to be successful in recovery and all that in-tales. We will take you from day 1 to day 90 and a successful completion of the program and how we utilize other local programs and businesses to help our residents be successful in their recovery and life.

**Speakers:**    **Robert Dalby** started working for Gateway in July of 2019 as a Counselor I, I have worked both men's Residential programs, then moved to the Recovery Home, then to Outpatient and was promoted to Counselor Supervisor in November of 2023.

**Michael Valliant** started working for Gateway in August of 2022 as a Recovery Coach. Mike also works for Carbondale United, an outreach program here in Carbondale.

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**CC13:        *Open Door: A Collaborative Model of Recovery***

Open Door SMART Recovery is an example of successful collaboration across four agencies to provide self-empowering, evidence-informed recovery support. We present this project as an interagency recovery service model.

**Speakers:**    **Angela Towne** began working in the recovery field as an educator, advocate, counselor, and program coordinator in 2004. In 2013, she moved to higher education. Currently, Dr. Towne works at SIUSOM as a curriculum developer, instructor, and program coordinator for programs including Peer Recovery Support and CADC.

**Cristina Castillo** has her M.S. in Educational Psychology, and serves as the Program Coordinator for the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development at SIU School of Medicine. She collaborates with regional partners to address persistent gaps in behavioral health access, and culturally responsive care impacting Hispanic/Latino communities.

**Quinn McBride** is Arrowleaf's Programs Coordinator for Mental Health Awareness Training and Supplies, Access, Facilitation, and Education grants, McBride trains community members and partners in methodologies of suicide prevention and mental health awareness including Adult Mental Health First Aid, and Question, Persuade, Refer.

**Cammy Duggins** has worked in human services for 23 years, having graduated with a BA in psychology from SIU-C in 2003. She is passionate about helping individuals in her community thrive throughout their lifetime despite hardship, trauma, or illness. After raising her family, Cammy began her career as adjunct faculty for Southeastern Illinois College at Golconda Job Corps working with high-risk youth. Later, she was hired as a mental health professional at Arrowleaf. In her 13 years with Arrowleaf, she served in multiple counseling and peer support roles. Much of Cammy's additional training focuses on substance use, recovery, and

trauma-informed care. She is trained and authorized to provide overdose education and naloxone distribution. In Cammy's current role, she coordinates the ROSC Council for Hardin and Pope Counties collaborating with local and regional partners to connect individuals with recovery services, resources, and support while growing a network of compassionate community members and collaborators that participate in educating the public on the need for stigma reduction surrounding substance use and mental health disorders.

**10:45 – 11:00 AM**

**Break**

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Breakout Sessions 4**

**DD1:           *A Canary In A Coal Mine: Addressing Trauma in Recovery Part 2***

In Part II you will learn evidence based and other strategies for addressing trauma and addiction. Topics covered include: 3 generations of trauma informed care; evidence based practices; centering, mindfulness and meditation; emotional regulation in recovery; lessons from Native American and First Nation Tribes in breaking patterns of generational trauma and addiction.

**Speaker:       Mark Sanders, LCSW, CADC**

*Note: The rest of the sessions are repeats from Session 3.*

**DD2:       *Celebrate Recovery***

Speakers: Scott Bollman and Dona Howell

**DD3:       *Service Dogs and Their Benefits to Mental Health***

Speakers: Tony Eaton and Doug Hexamer

**DD4:       *Lets Talk About It! Systematic Harms in Society***

Speakers: Torie Patton, Valerie Stewart, Rachel Tucker & Heather Dale

**DD5:       *SIYEN Unplugged: Prevention, But Real***

Speakers: Teea Ferrell, Danielle Kroeger & Jessica Schultz

**DD6:       *From Withdrawal to Wellness: A Guide to MAT and Detox Medications***

Speaker: Krysten Green

**DD7:       *Intersection of Substance Abuse and Juvenile Court***

Speaker: Judge Amanda Byassee Gott

**DD8:       *“Whole Family” Recovery: Building Family Recovery Capital***

Speakers: Mike Tyson and Megan Ragan

**DD9:       *Problem Solving Courts (PSC101)***

Speakers: Judge Carey Gill and Jeff Watkins

**DD10:      *Bridging Gaps in Community Health: Substance Use Challenges in Vulnerable Populations***

Speaker: Carrie Vine

**DD11:      *Certified Peer Workforce Development***

Speakers: Elizabeth Raleigh and Bobby Baker

**DD12:      *A New Life: Carbondale Gateway Recovery Home Program***

Speakers: Robert Dalby and Michael Valliant

## **DD13: *Open Door: A Collaborative Model of Recovery***

Speakers: Angela Towne, Cristina Castillo, Quinn McBride and Cammy Duggins

### **12:00 PM– 1:30 PM: Lunch Break**

#### *Group A:*

- **12:00 PM – 1:00 PM:** Lunch at the Food Court
- **1:00 PM – 1:30 PM:** Visit Vendors

#### *Group B:*

- **12:00 PM – 12:30 PM:** Visit Vendors
- **12:30 PM – 1:30 PM:** Lunch at the Food Court

### **1:30 PM – 2:30 PM Plenary 5**

#### ***People in Recovery***

This powerful session highlights the resilience, courage, and hope found in lived experience. Participants will hear two deeply personal recovery stories that illuminate the realities of substance use, mental health, healing, and transformation.

**Speakers:** **Shyla Hernandez** is a person in long term recovery with lived experience with SWUD and Mental . She will be sharing her personal story.

**Keith Darter** is a former Marine who entered the Williamson County Drug Veterans Court in 2019. At the time, Keith was struggling with methamphetamine addiction, unemployed, estranged from his family, and facing a potential sentence to the Illinois Department of Corrections. Throughout his participation in Drug Court, Keith received no sanctions, achieved sustained sobriety, reunited with his family, and secured full-time employment. Since graduating from the program in 2021, Keith has remained drug-free, financially stable, and gainfully employed, and he continues to give back by supporting and encouraging others who are impacted by substance use disorders.

**Michael Wooten** will present *A Brave Little Toaster*. A personal recovery story using the Brave Little Toaster to illustrate the 12 Steps, practical tools, transparency, and how connection to something greater restores purpose and hope. Michael received the gift of sobriety on April 1, 2021, and has taken his recovery to the dance floor as owner of Effervescent Studios in Granite City. A Studio focused on building a community that supports one another on and off the dance floor.

**Jamal Oxford's** story is one of Redemption- after serving time in prison, he chose to transform his life rather than be defined by his past. Today, he pours that hard earned perspective into helping others who are once where he was, proving that change is possible and purpose can rise from pain.

### **2:30 – 2:45 PM Break**

**2:45 – 3:45 PM**

**Plenary 6**

***Peer Professionals: A Panel Discussion***

Peer professionals from diverse settings share their lived experiences and insights on providing recovery support services across Southern Illinois communities and various sectors.

**Speaker:** **Mike Tyson** is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and the Director of Recovery Support Services at the Southern Illinois Resource and Advocacy Center. He is a statewide leader and advocate for peer based services and recovery oriented systems of care. He also holds an MSW in Leadership and Social Change.

**3:45 PM**

**Closing and door prizes**

Must be present to win

Mark your calendars to join us in 2027!!! If you have any suggestions for speakers, topics and/or improvements, please do not hesitate to email me at [jackiew@siu.edu](mailto:jackiew@siu.edu).

**Save the Date**  
**March 11-12, 2027**



**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS**  
DRUG AWARENESS CONFERENCE