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Susquehanna Valley United Way's United in Recovery Launches 2026 Community Connection Series

New spring and summer events create welcoming spaces for healing, remembrance, and wellness – bringing the community together to reduce stigma and strengthen recovery support

Selinsgrove and Bloomsburg, PA, February 20th, 2026 – Recovery does not happen alone. This spring and summer, Susquehanna Valley United Way's United in Recovery team (svuw.org/united-in-recovery) is launching a series of community-centered events designed to create connection, reduce stigma, and support individuals and families impacted by substance use disorder.

Grounded in United Way's Healthy Community impact area, the series reflects a comprehensive approach to prevention, intervention, and community-building—creating spaces where healing and growth can flourish.

Canvas & Cocoa | Saturday, February 28 at 2:00 PM

The Creative Space in Selinsgrove, 201 West Pine Street

\$25 per person | Limited spots available

The series begins with Canvas & Cocoa, a relaxed and welcoming creative afternoon open to individuals in recovery, allies, and anyone seeking meaningful community connection. The event invites participants to paint, enjoy cocoa and light bites, and spend time together in a judgment-free environment. All supplies are provided, and no art experience is necessary. Tickets are on sale now at svuw.org/events/canvas-cocoa. To ensure a spot, participants are encouraged to purchase in advance as space is limited.

The event is intentionally designed to create space for conversation, belonging, and restoration—reminding participants that recovery does not happen in isolation.

“The opposite of addiction is connection,” said Pamela Comfort-McGinness, Recovery Engagement Project Coordinator / CRS / FPS. “While bringing the community together for fun, there is a bigger meaning behind this. Feeling a part of something bigger, like a community, promotes a sense of belonging, allows for rebuilding of relationships, and strengthens the recovery journey. When we connect, we heal.”

Black Balloon Day | Friday, March 6

Downtown Sunbury, Bloomsburg, and Berwick

On March 6, United in Recovery will observe Black Balloon Day—an annual day of remembrance honoring the lives lost to overdose and raising awareness about prevention and support.

Black ribbons will be placed throughout downtown Sunbury and Bloomsburg, each accompanied by information on harm reduction resources and recovery services available through United in Recovery.

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That evening, United in Recovery will partner with Jeremy's Journey (for a community gathering at **Sponsler Park (600-698 Monroe Street) in Berwick**, beginning at **6:00 PM**). The event offers a space for remembrance and reflection while also connecting individuals and families with life-saving resources, including free Narcan kits and fentanyl and xylazine testing strips.

Rather than releasing traditional black balloons, attendees will be invited to write the names of loved ones lost to overdose on provided luminary bags. A candlelight ceremony at 6:30 PM will illuminate the park in a shared moment of solidarity, remembrance, and hope. Community members will also have the opportunity to share personal stories and experiences.

Mocktail Mixer | Thursday, April 30 at 4:30 PM

The HUB at Mulberry Mills
160 W. 6th Street, Bloomsburg

In recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month, United in Recovery will host an interactive mocktail event focused on inclusion, empowerment, and education. Designed to appeal to individuals who are sober curious, in recovery, or simply exploring alcohol-free options, the event will teach participants how to craft celebratory beverages without alcohol.

The goal is simple: create spaces where everyone feels included at special events and social gatherings—without pressure or stigma.

Recovery in Motion Series

Second Sunday of each month | June–October 2026

Rotating locations across Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union Counties

Launching this summer, Recovery in Motion is a five-month hiking series designed to promote physical activity, mental wellness, and peer connection.

Research supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) highlights exercise as a powerful, evidence-based tool in addiction recovery. Physical activity reduces stress, anxiety, and cravings while supporting the brain's natural reward system. Consistent routines build confidence, structure, and resilience—factors that strengthen long-term recovery.

By hosting monthly hikes across the five-county region, United in Recovery is expanding access to healthy spaces and reinforcing the message that movement, community, and connection are essential components of healing.

“Our United in Recovery program is a staple of the Susquehanna Valley United Way,” said Mark Stankiewicz, President/CEO. “We are proud of the work that our team does getting into the community and assisting those who need it most. They pride themselves on coming to where you are and doing whatever it takes to accommodate your needs and make sure that you are heard.”

Building a Healthy Community

Substance misuse remains one of the most significant public health challenges impacting families and communities. United in Recovery takes a proactive approach—combining prevention education, harm reduction strategies, recovery engagement, and community-based events to reduce stigma and expand access to support.

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“At Susquehanna Valley United Way, the mission of the United in Recovery Program is to foster a supportive community where healing and growth can flourish,” said Joanne Sloneem, Vice President of Operations. “Through events like Black Balloon Day, our Mocktail Event in April, and Recovery in Motion over the summer, we are creating spaces for individuals to connect, share their journeys, and celebrate the strength in unity. Together, we are building a future where recovery is not only possible, but celebrated.”

Through free Naloxone (Narcan) distribution, Post Overdose Response Team (PORT) outreach, youth prevention initiatives, and public awareness campaigns, United in Recovery meets people where they are—offering life-saving tools, compassionate connection, and pathways to care.

When communities come together, healing becomes possible.

For event details, registration information, or to learn more about United in Recovery, visit svuw.org or follow Susquehanna Valley United Way on social media [@SusquehannaValleyUW](https://twitter.com/SusquehannaValleyUW).

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About Susquehanna Valley United Way:

Susquehanna Valley United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive. Serving Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union Counties, we focus on four key areas: Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security, and Community Resiliency. Together with our partners and neighbors, we’re building a stronger, more hopeful future for all. Learn more at svuw.org.