

As 2018 draws to a close, we're devoting this month's issue to a look back at some of the year's key SASH successes.

Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy holiday season and a wonderful 2019!



SASH mental-health pilot proves value of embedded clinician

With funding from [OneCare Vermont](#), SASH partnered with the [Howard Center](#) on a pilot that added a mental-health clinician to the SASH teams at two affordable-housing communities in Burlington. Among the goals: faster access to care for residents with mental-health and substance-use challenges, enhanced inter-agency team coordination, reduced stigma, and improved patient experiences. On all counts, the program has proved a success.



The embedded clinician provided flexible options for both formal therapy and informal "emotional wellness visits" to participants in their homes. She focused on prevention by offering regular support groups and education sessions on a myriad of mental-health conditions. She also provided support to the SASH staff on how to handle challenging conversations and de-escalate difficult situations. "Her expertise has been vital in complementing our goal to support SASH participants so they can continue to live independently at home," reports SASH Coordinator Kristi Lyon.



New SASH/Alzheimer's Association direct-referral program

Working with the [Vermont chapter of the Alzheimer's Association](#), SASH established a streamlined process whereby staff can now directly refer participants and their family members to the Alzheimer's Association for prompt and professional follow-up. Upon receiving a referral, a trained clinician calls the person to discuss their needs and concerns, then provides a summary of the discussion back to the SASH staff person who made the referral.



SASH Coordinator Susan Abell referred a participant whose husband had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. She said she was glad to receive the summary and "know exactly what the clinical manager discussed with my participant, and also learn that the participant's husband had an appointment for a driving evaluation." You can [view the summary here](#).



Doubling down on diabetes

SASH wrapped up a successful pilot in Rutland that measured the impact of adding a community pharmacist to the SASH team to help participants with diabetes or pre-diabetes better manage their condition. The results were impressive, showing a reduction in A1c, BMI and other measures. We subsequently received a

grant from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to continue and expand this focus statewide, working in partnership with the [Vermont Department of Health](#). [Download this summary](#) for details about the pilot's outcomes.



Zeroing in on suicide prevention

Recognizing that the suicide rate in Vermont is 35% higher than the national average and that men aged 70 to 74 are particularly at risk, this year SASH worked closely with the Brattleboro-based [Center for Health & Learning](#) to provide training on the evidence-based [UMatter](#) program, a peer-education, suicide-prevention program originally designed for sharing in schools, in order to adapt it for SASH participants. SASH had trained dozens of staff in the UMatter program and presented it to 110+ participants as of mid-December.



Also on the suicide-prevention front, SASH's Melissa Southwick and Lisa Pate discussed SASH's ongoing work in this regard on [the Oct. 11 episode of "Across the Fence,"](#) the long-running daytime TV program produced by UVM Extension.



Growing recognition — and replication — of SASH

- As [Saint Elizabeth Community](#) in **Rhode Island** approaches its third year operating SASH at one of its 12 affordable-housing communities, the organization is moving forward with plans to expand SASH to three other housing organizations. It received a major grant from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation in 2018 to help make it happen.
- Mindful of SASH's success in Rhode Island and having followed SASH's work in Vermont for several years, two nonprofit housing organizations in **Minnesota** were awarded \$1.3 million from the Cargill Foundation to replicate SASH for two years at five affordable-housing communities in that state. Work will begin in earnest by spring 2019.

Major media covering SASH in 2018 included:

- **Reuters** (["Vermont can show Washington the way on senior housing policy"](#));
- **U.S. News & World Report** (["Aging into a Better Life"](#));
- The **Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation** (["Care That Works"](#)), an issue brief that includes a success story about a RuralEdge SASH participant in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom; and
- The **national HUD research journal, Cityscape** (["The Impact of the Vermont Support and Services at Home Program on Healthcare Expenditures,"](#) a report that revealed across-the-board Medicare savings in urban SASH panels, summarized in this **Vermont Business Magazine** article: ["Vermont's SASH program linked to Medicare Savings in ER"](#)).



Last but not least: countless individual successes!

Every day we are reminded of the tremendous difference SASH makes in the health and quality of life for so many Vermonters. From helping participants manage high blood pressure and diabetes to instilling healthy lifestyles and reducing

isolation, SASH is making Vermont a healthier state. Here are a few recent success stories from staff:

- SASH, the Howard Center and AgeWell teamed up to help a SASH participant who was struggling with his landlord and at risk of losing his housing. After finding him a new home and helping him get packed and moved, the team continues its “it takes a village” approach, working to help him maintain his health, pay his bills, control his behaviors, manage his medications and more.



- A SASH participant diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease had no support from family and friends and was not able to follow up with care or maintain his necessary medications. Additional challenges included unpaid bills, failed housing inspections, poor nutrition and more. After a few months on the priority list of his SASH team, SASH was able to make contact with a son, who is now moving to live with him. A single, lonely, vulnerable adult is now getting support from family.
- An exercise program hosted at a RuralEdge SASH site has become a “must do” event for a committed group of participants in the Northeast Kingdom. It includes one person who is 101 and two who are 99. In the past year three of them were hospitalized, but they all bounced back and continue to attend the class every week. They make the classes a priority and proudly tell their doctor and family how much they enjoy them.
- The “above and beyond” work of SASH Coordinator Carolyn Lorie in White River Junction attracted the attention of *Valley News* columnist Jim Kenyon, who recently wrote about a disabled SASH participant’s harrowing experience with public transportation and Carolyn’s call to the rescue – and her additional, ongoing support to reduce the participant’s isolation and help her get out of her apartment. You can [read the article here](#).



Partners represented on SASH teams throughout Vermont include members and affiliates of these organizations:



A comprehensive list of all the valued partners in SASH can be found in the [SASH Partnership](#).

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