



SPECIAL EDITION

# ELK GROVE Villager



IN THIS ISSUE:

Three Years In, Elk Grove Village Cares Delivering on its Promise to Help and Support those Suffering from Opioid Addiction

Message from the Mayor & Board

Nick's Story - One Elk Grove Village Cares Participant's Journey of Tragedy and Resilience

Need for Support and Substance Abuse Treatment Programs Greater than Ever as Opioid Deaths and Overdoses Increase amid Coronavirus Pandemic

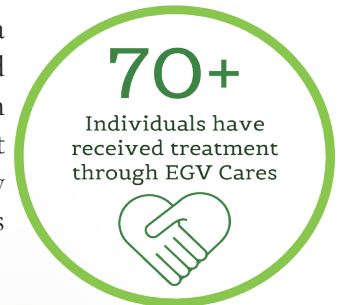
This newsletter is published by the Village of Elk Grove Village  
901 Wellington Avenue  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007  
Telephone 847.439.3900  
TDD 847.357.4088  
www.elkgrove.org

The Village Hall is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for payment of water bills, local fines, pet licenses, vehicle stickers and general Village information. In addition, the Finance counter is open on the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and the Community Development counter is open on the first Saturday of the month of May through September from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Village Board meetings are generally held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

## THREE YEARS IN, ELK GROVE VILLAGE CARES DELIVERING ON ITS PROMISE TO HELP AND SUPPORT THOSE SUFFERING FROM DISEASE OF ADDICTION

When the Village launched Elk Grove Village Cares--a comprehensive, community-based strategy to tackle the opioid crisis--the aim was to make it easier to access and remain in treatment for addiction, strengthen the community support network, eradicate the stigma of addiction and save lives by placing opioid overdose-reversing medication in public. There has been much progress over the last three years.



More than 70 people have sought treatment through the program. The support network is strong and growing thanks to the partnerships EGV Cares has built with treatment providers. Additionally, there are now Narcan kits at 24 locations throughout the Village so that anyone willing can step in and render aid to someone suffering from an overdose.

While EGV Cares started as a strategy to combat addiction to opioids, officials learned quickly that people were also accessing care through the program for alcoholism.

“If you’re seeking help for the disease of addiction, you’ll get the support you need from Elk Grove Village Cares.” said Mayor Craig Johnson. “We turn no one away no matter the crisis. We are here to get you that help, whether the addiction is to opioids, narcotics or alcohol.”

EGV Cares is also emerging as a regional information and educational resource on the complex issues associated with substance dependency. In 2019 EGV Cares teamed up with the Kenneth Young Center to host “Remember. Recover. Discover. A Community Awareness Day.” This public event brought together experts in substance abuse and mental health to educate community members about resources available to combat the disease of addiction.



And thanks to a federal grant, EGV Cares partners with the Kenneth Young Center and Live4Lali to provide Narcan-related training and resources to regional law enforcement organizations and community groups. Narcan, also known as Naloxone, is a drug administered via a nasal spray which can temporarily stop or reverse the effects of an opioid or heroin overdose. Narcan allows EMTs and police officers to take potentially life-saving action when they encounter an individual suffering an overdose.

“It’s not enough to simply get more people into treatment, unfortunately,” said Mayor Johnson. “We’ve taken the lead to serve as a regional resource for other communities seeking to take on the opioid epidemic in a smart, strategic and comprehensive way. The key to that is forming strong working relationships with treatment providers, community groups and advocacy organizations to tackle the disease of addiction on every front.”

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Three years ago our community took bold, proactive steps to tackle the opioid epidemic, which was at that time the nation's most urgent public health crisis. Too many people were falling victim to heroin and other opioids. Too many families were being destroyed by the disease of addiction. And, too many of our residents didn't know where to turn for support.

Elk Grove Village Cares is filling many of the gaps in treatment, support and education for addressing the disease of addiction that have existed in our region for too long.

While much of our attention over this last year has rightfully been focused on keeping our community healthy and safe amid the coronavirus pandemic, our work to get those suffering from addiction the help they seek has continued uninterrupted.

This special edition of The Villager highlights some of the successes that have unfolded here in our community since we embraced the idea of getting more treatment and support to those who need it most.

In addition to getting more than 70 individuals into treatment programs over the last three years, Elk Grove Village Cares has also:

- Secured state and federal grants to help the uninsured access treatment and to educate our neighboring communities and first responders about the use of Narcan, an overdose-reversing drug that saves lives.
- Installed emergency Narcan kits throughout Elk Grove Village, enabling citizens to administer the drug if someone is suffering an opioid-related overdose. The kits are available at 19 locations, including Village Hall, the library, schools, churches and businesses in town.

“We've saved lives, we've raised awareness and we've chipped away at the stigma associated with opioid addiction”  
-Mayor Craig B. Johnson



Pictured in front row from left to right are Trustee Nancy Czarnik, Mayor Craig Johnson, and Trustee Christine Prochno. Pictured in the second row from left to right are Trustee Jeffrey Franke, Trustee Stephen Schmidt, Trustee Samuel Lissner, and Trustee Patton Feichter.

- Strengthened the Village's partnerships with regional treatment providers, including the Howard Brown Center, Amita Health, The Gateway Foundation and the SHARE Program.
- Worked to remove the stigma associated with opioid addiction while also recognizing that family members and loved ones of addicts also need guidance, compassion and support.

As we emerge from the coronavirus pandemic and begin to refocus our energies on other challenges, let us not forget that people in our neighborhoods and in our community are suffering from the disease of addiction. Opioid-related deaths have spiked during the pandemic. This should remind of us of the work we still have to do to keep all families safe and healthy.

Finally, we would like to thank all Village employees who have played such an instrumental role in making Elk Grove Village Cares the success it has become. Their commitment and compassion has saved lives. And, to our great pride, our community has risen to meet this challenge as well.

We look forward to our continuing work to get help to those who need it most. Elk Grove Village Cares works because all of us care.



## NICK'S STORY - ONE ELK GROVE VILLAGE CARES PARTICIPANT'S JOURNEY OF TRAGEDY AND RESILIENCE

Nick talks today about his years long battle against heroin addiction as being part of “his story.” His “story” is one that he does not run away from or hide. He tells his story in a language well-known by other heroin addicts. He speaks of “going on a run” when describing prolonged stretches of heroin use, and talks about his multiple relapses as “going back out there.” But he also speaks very frankly about his journey toward recovery from heroin addiction and how Elk Grove Village Cares played a role in finding him the help he so desperately wanted.

Nick's story is full of personal tragedy and remarkable resilience. He has lost friends to addiction since he started using heroin 14 years ago. His fiancée, whom he met at a Heroin Anonymous meeting while trying to recover from drug addiction, died of an overdose in 2019 in their Elk Grove Village townhouse just two months after having a baby girl.

Not long after that, Nick's own mother burst into the very same townhouse where his fiancée died and pulled him out

of a heroin-induced overdose using Narcan, an overdose-reversing medication. By his own estimation, Nick has overdosed five times.

“After my fiancée passed away I just couldn't imagine my life with drugs but I also couldn't imagine my life without drugs. That is a very dark place to be, believe me,” said Nick.

It was then that he remembered a card given to him by the Elk Grove Police detective who was conducting the death investigation into his fiancée's fatal overdose. The card provided information about how to get substance abuse help through Elk Grove Village Cares. Nick called

the phone number on the card and got in touch with Des Raftery who leads social services for the Elk Grove Village Police Department.

“Des had me in a treatment facility within hours and that was critical because I was ready then to get help. I was in a serious amount of pain and was ready to commit myself to rehab,” Nick said. Many addicts have a hard time finding treatment facilities due to lack of available beds, insurance or other factors. Counselors know how vital it is to connect addicts with treatment programs when the addict is open to receiving help. Often that window of opportunity is only open for a short time, however.

“When someone is open to going into treatment and through the torturous detox process it's critical to get them the help they need right away before they change their minds. It is during those moments where lives get saved,” said Raftery. “Elk Grove Village Cares has relationships with multiple treatment providers and can in most cases find a facility with an open bed within hours after receiving a request for help.”

Treatment providers that are able to accept Elk Grove Village Cares participants include the SHARE Program and the Gateway Foundation. Nick's road to recovery has been bumpy at times. He has gone into treatment nearly a dozen times but each time wound up “going back out there on another run.”

“I can say each time I went back out there, I learned something,” said Nick, who is 37 years old. “Looking back, I know that I had to go through each and every one of those runs in order to get to where I am today.”

As bumpy as the road has been, it's not unusual for an addict to enter treatment programs only to relapse later. “The average addict goes into treatment eight to ten times over the course of their using lives. Each attempt is progress. Relapses are not failures, they are chapters along the way for those who ultimately want to get themselves clean,” said Raftery.

Nick says Des and the program were critical to his recovery. Elk Grove Village Cares placed him in treatment programs twice and stayed in touch with him to offer ongoing support and encouragement.

*Continued on page 4.*

Presorted STD Mail  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Palatine P&DC, IL  
Permit No. 11

## NICK'S STORY CONT.

*Continued from page 3.*

Today Nick remains clean and sober and has been for a year. His construction/remodeling company is thriving and he's living on his own after having spent several months in sober living communities.

Nick's story isn't so much about the dark places he's been. Today it's about his own continuing recovery and his efforts to help others locked in the grip of addiction. He has recommended five people to the Elk Grove Village Cares program and stays active in the recovery community by attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings regularly, sponsoring addicts and giving them the support they need to continue their growth and healing.

"I have so much gratitude for what the Village has done for myself and others who are working hard on their recovery. Elk Grove Village Cares got me sober. And today, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous and the support of the fellowship and others, I can stay sober."

## NEED FOR SUPPORT AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAMS GREATER THAN EVER AMID CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

### Looking for help with a substance abuse problem?

Contact the Village or one of our treatment partners for guidance accessing quality, compassionate treatment for the disease of addiction:

**Elk Grove Village Police Department:**

901 Wellington Avenue  
elkgrovetillagecares@elkgrove.org  
847-357-4100

**Amita Health:** 877-262-5048  
www.amitahealth.org/addiction

**Gateway Foundation:**  
877-505-4673  
www.recovergateway.org

**Leyden Family Service & Mental Health Center:**  
847-882-4148  
www.leydenfamilyservice.org

Substance abuse experts were not surprised to see that the number of overdoses and opioid-related deaths in Illinois spiked last year as coronavirus cases skyrocketed throughout Illinois, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Opioid-related deaths in Illinois increased by 32 percent last year compared to 2019. Last year, 2,904 died of overdoses in Illinois compared to 2,219 in 2019.

Experts say many pandemic-related factors likely contributed to the increase. Stay at home orders meant that individuals in treatment were unable to attend support meetings or meet in person with counselors. Further, treatment facilities were forced to limit capacity, meaning many people found it difficult to get treatment. Additionally, the pandemic brought on other stressors such as economic hardship, job loss and social isolation that make the vulnerable more prone to abuse drugs and alcohol as a means to cope.

"Weathering the pandemic and the disruption to our daily lives has been a significant challenge for everyone. But imagine how difficult it

has been for those recovering from the disease of addiction who need balance and structure in their lives in order to stay on the road to recovery," said Desmond Raftery, a social worker for the Village. "Here in Elk Grove Village, we advocate for those seeking substance abuse counseling and support. We can help those looking to get clean find a treatment facility and be there as they begin their journey. And, we can provide counseling to family members who also face significant challenges when a loved one falls victim to opioid abuse and addiction."

**Seeking help through Elk Grove Village Cares:** If you or a loved one is seeking treatment, EGV Cares will do everything we can to find you the help you need. All you have to do is show up at the Elk Grove Village Police Department located at 901 Wellington Ave. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or in possession of illegal substances, the Village will not arrest you. Instead, we will work with you to identify a nearby treatment facility and transport you there.