



CAPE ASSIST
PREVENTING AND TREATING SUBSTANCE MISUSE

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

OUR MISSION

Cape Assist is dedicated to preventing and treating substance misuse and related issues in Cape May County through education, advocacy, counseling, and community collaboration.



ABOUT US

Cape Assist is strongly positioned as the leading prevention and treatment agency serving Cape May County residents. A 501(c)(3), the organization specializes in drug and alcohol education and counseling services. The nonprofit's work with adult and youth populations in Cape May County has become a vital service for the community, made possible through strong partnerships and collaborations.



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Cape Assist believes in treating the whole individual – body, mind, and spirit. Their client-centered approach is founded on the belief that true change comes from the internal motivation of the individual. The professionals at Cape Assist meet clients wherever they are in their recovery journeys in the hopes of helping to elicit positive personal change. Cape Assist also works toward creating effective prevention strategies for reducing substance misuse by using a tri-fold approach: advocacy, community collaboration and education.

Katie Faldetta
*Executive Director
& CEO*

Heather Saul
*Associate
Director*

Dan Borawski
*Director of
Operations*

**Tusa Magalogo-
Fitisemanu**
*Director of
Communications*

Kathryn Gibson
*Director of
Recovery
Services*

Joseph Faldetta
*Director of
Prevention
Services*



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"To say that my time working with Cape Assist has been anything short of extraordinary, would be an understatement. I am honored to have witnessed firsthand the tireless work and dedication of the Cape Assist staff who pour their hearts and souls into the organization in order to ensure that the mission statement is realized and lives of those on need throughout Cape May County are changed through the services Cape Assist offers."

- John Amenhauser

**John
Amenhauser**
President

Michael Clark
Vice President

Dave Joslin
Secretary

Cathy Phillip
Treasurer

Patty Weeks
Trustee

Allison Murphy
Trustee



A Letter from the Executive Director

It is with immense gratitude and pride that I share with you our 2023 Annual Report on behalf of the dedicated board and staff at Cape Assist. As I reflect on the past year, I am truly fortunate to have the unwavering support and dedication of our team members and community partners. Your contribution to delivering our mission to prevent substance misuse and mental health challenges in youth, young adults and adults is a vital task that ultimately uplifts and empowers Cape May County residents.

My journey at Cape Assist over the last 20 years has been marked by countless moments of compassion, resilience and collaboration. From navigating the challenges of the opioid epidemic to weathering the storm brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has demonstrated an unparalleled spirit of unity and solidarity. To every individual who has donated, volunteered or supported our events, I extend my deepest gratitude.

As we embark on the year ahead, we are resolute in our commitment to address the pressing issues of mental health and substance misuse that continue to impact individuals and communities across our county. Our efforts will be focused on amplifying support systems, including community partnerships and resources that help alleviate the burdens faced by people grappling with these challenges.

In this challenging endeavor, we are also privileged to have the steadfast support of community members like you. Together, we will continue our shared commitment to foster health, resilience and hope within our community. Thank you for always being there for Cape Assist, and I look forward to the road ahead with you all.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Katie Faldetta



A Letter from Temerity “T” Ennis Berry

Celebrating 20 years with Cape Assist

When I was a teenager, I would watch from my house as a 16-year-old friend of mine, walked into a local house of a known drug dealer. When I asked adults questions about my friend, instead of getting answers, I was just told to “stay away.” I couldn’t understand why no one was doing anything to help him. Instead, I saw inaction. Later that year, he died by suicide. Even that wasn’t enough to break the silence. This all had an impact on me. It's the reason why I joined an organization that could provide the preventative and proactive opportunities that Cape Assist does for our community.

Reflecting on that experience 25 years later, I realize his friends and the adults around them had no idea how they could help. Prevention Science was barely a field of study when I first started my work at Cape Assist in 2004. Over the years, prevention has become a science backed by research and evidence-based practices and programs. I learned as the field grew about the complexities of substance misuse, mental health challenges and crises, and the root causes of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Today, I hold a bachelor's degree in psychology and criminal justice, a Prevention Specialist Certification, and Applied Educational Neuroscience Certification. In my 20 years with Cape Assist, I’ve been able to apply that knowledge and, I’m glad to say, I have rarely had two days that look the same. I’ve done everything from sitting on the floor with puppets talking to kindergarteners, to presenting to county officials.

My diverse experiences have kept me grounded. In most ways, I am still that teenager asking, “How can we help?” Today, I am happy to say I am part of a team that is trained in nationally recognized evidence-based programs and practices. I have tirelessly engaged in community-wide discussions and initiatives to help de-stigmatize mental health challenges and addiction so that people can get the help they need to heal. I am blessed to have been able to grow in knowledge, skills and confidence since beginning this journey with Cape Assist, and I am excited to share all this with a community that has supported me over the last 20 years.



Beloved Former Cape Assist Executive Director Leaves a Legacy of Service and Kindness

Lynne Krukosky's indelible mark on Cape Assist over her 26-year tenure reverberates through the countless lives she touched. As the guiding force behind the organization, her exceptional leadership seamlessly intertwined with her genuine compassion for both her team and the community at large. Under her steadfast leadership, Cape Assist achieved significant milestones, including the launch of the county's underage drinking prevention program, "We Check for 21," in 1992, the acquisition of the Cape Assist headquarters in 2005, and the successful passage of crucial legislation.

The Cape May County community mourned deeply upon losing this champion – a woman affectionately regarded as one of the “Founding Mothers” of the present statewide prevention and recovery network. She was an unforgettable pioneer in the field and an unwavering advocate who championed the underdog and, regardless of the situation, never turned away anyone who needed her help. A servant leader, Krukosky possessed an unparalleled ability to bridge divides, fostering unity and collective focus on the well-being of the community. Though her physical presence is absent, her spirit endures, guiding the next generation of agency leaders. Cape Assist’s current Executive Director Kate Faldetta, reflects on Krukosky's legacy with reverence, recalling moments when her mentor's compassionate leadership survived challenges and fostered unity among opposing factions. Faldetta aptly captures Krukosky's essence, remarking on her unique talent for illuminating truth and inspiring collective action in the service of the community's greater good.

“There was always a reason to say no, but Lynne gave them a reason to say yes to moving that kid or the community forward,” Faldetta said. “She had a perfect way of getting people to see that whatever Cape Assist was trying to do was in the community's best interest. It was like they didn’t see the truth until she showed it to them.”

In Krukosky's memory, Cape Assist remains steadfast in its mission, ensuring her vision of a healthier, more cohesive community continues to thrive.

Lynne Krukosky, February 23, 1951 - July 9, 2023



PREVENTION & PROGRAMS

Prevention is the key to and foundation of decreasing substance misuse and other drug-related issues in our communities, schools, businesses, and other professional organizations. By utilizing tools to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors Cape Assist focuses on three main areas to create an effective prevention strategy for reducing substance misuse: education, advocacy and community collaboration. Cape Assist provides evidence-based education programs for all ages with the addition of community and youth-based coalitions and groups.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROGRAMS



In 2023, 59 families participated in SFP, and 49 participated in MSFP.

The Strengthening Families Programs (SFP) are evidence-based and recognized nationally and internationally for encouraging family bonding. It includes a program specifically geared for military families (MSFP) and the unique challenges they face. SFP and MSFP are multi-session programs for families who want to improve their family dynamics in several areas including communication, discipline strategies, limit setting and more. Cape Assist offers incentives for families to participate, such as providing dinners for those who attend and gift cards for those who successfully complete the program.

K.A.R.E. AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Kids Art Resource and Education (K.A.R.E.) Center is for children who are in kindergarten to first-grade. This program focuses on developing personal and social skills necessary to make informed choices in life.

In 2023, 10 students (K-1st) participated in K.A.R.E.



ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

CareGiver Support - Caregiver Support Group is a free five-week program available to anyone currently caring for a loved one or a patient. Caregivers who are feeling stressed, confused, overwhelmed, depressed, or burned out are encouraged to join as they would greatly benefit from the group. The support group is an effective way to reduce stress, receive useful advice, discover local resources, and be surrounded by others who are going through similar experiences.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - EAP is designed to help employees and their families take care of issues that have a negative impact on job performance. The program offers assistance in a variety of situations, including stress, divorce or separation, grief and bereavement, emotional problems, financial problems, problems with alcohol or drugs, gambling, family conflict and other personal/job-related problems.

The Quit Center - Cape Assist's Quit Center program provides Cape May County residents with free assessments, individualized case management, one-on-one and group counseling, and Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT). Assessments are done over the phone; the counseling and support groups are currently held through Zoom or by phone; and Cape Assist will mail the NRT to the person's home.

W.I.S.E. - The Wellness Initiative for Senior Education is a wellness and prevention program for older adults. The program is designed to celebrate healthy aging, make healthy lifestyle choices, and avoid medication misuse. The free program provides valuable educational services to older adults on topics including medication misuse and management, stress management, depression, and substance misuse.

"I do not believe I would have been able to become smoke free if not for this program in general and Lisa Harczak in particular. Lisa provided me with a logical, practical and achievable end to smoking. She offers strategies and support in a nonjudgmental way that makes the process of quitting obtainable. Lisa's role, along with the nicotine replacement products and weekly Zoom meetings have gotten me to a place I would have thought impossible a few years ago."
- D.C. (client)

ACE-ING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Cape Assist spends a lot of time talking about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These experiences are traumatic events that negatively affect brain development in ways that cause lasting health challenges, emotional and physical. More than 40 percent of children in New Jersey – that's more than 782,000 – are estimated to have experienced one traumatic event, and 18 percent of children are believed to have experienced multiple experiences according to a July 2019 report “Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey.” However, research has shown that “ACEs” can be counterbalanced through positive experiences, support and nurturing relationships.

Fostering a resilient community also involves prioritizing three key strategies: advocacy, community partnerships, and education.

ADVOCACY



Healthy communities require the collective effort of community members to support youth through advocacy. This advocacy grows through robust collaborative partnerships and community-wide education initiatives, areas in which the Healthy Community Coalition has excelled in for over two decades.

Understanding of the ACE research and emerging brain science has enabled the coalition to broaden its prevention practices and focus on creating a trauma responsive community by utilizing the following three methods:

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

1. Bring awareness of neuroscience to multiple sectors of the community and inspire them to utilize this knowledge to make their interactions with youth more meaningful and brain aligned.

2. Have the coalition members look at strategies for community change through a trauma-informed lens.

3. Inspire seemingly disconnected sectors of the community to collaborate more and weave a tighter community net where children and adolescents can find safety and support.



EDUCATION

By directly and regularly engaging with Cape May County's youth about drug misuse during Cape Assist's annual Peer Leadership Conference, the organization ensures its messages of support and prevention hit the target audience – roughly 400 middle and high school students who attend the event. Cape Assist's annual Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest also provides an opportunity to reiterate this messaging to the county's youth.

CAPE ASSIST'S COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



Cape May County Healthy Community Coalition (HCC) is a group of community members representing: youth, parents, schools, law enforcement, youth-serving organizations, the faith-based community, substance misuse treatment agencies, local government, healthcare, businesses, media, civic/volunteer groups with a mission to create healthy communities by reducing substance misuse.



Lower Township Healthy Youth Coalition (LTHYC) is a group of community members of all ages and all walks of life. Members include educators, law enforcement, parents, youth, faith leaders and businesses focused in Lower Township. Their mission is to plan and implement strategies to prevent and reduce youth substance misuse and its associated consequences.



The P.R.I.D.E. Committee works toward better understanding how the opioid epidemic was affecting school-age children in Cape May County. Over time, the focus of the committee has widened to include the link between childhood trauma and addiction. Members include the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, the Cape May County Office of Education, County Educators, and the County Department of Human Services.



The Hope One Van of Cape May County travels throughout the county to help educate the community with the help of local partners and provides addiction treatment services. The purpose is to meet to people where they are and provide resources on site. They also offer Narcan Training.



Cape May County Youth Resiliency Team brings a youth perspective to the work being done with The Cape May County Healthy Community Coalition and the surrounding communities. Open to all high school-age students, the team meets once a month to discuss substance misuse prevention and promote the overall well-being and resilience of young people.



Incrruptible.US Cape May County aims to educate students, parents, teachers, and members of Cape May County about the dangers of BIG Tobacco and the ever-growing vaping epidemic that is affecting so many individuals. The group is open to any high school-aged students in Cape May County that are motivated and passionate about making a difference.

COMMUNITY COALITIONS

Youth Support Initiatives of Cape Assist

Cape Assist's community coalition initiatives (Cape May County Healthy Communities Coalition and the Lower Township Healthy Youth Coalition) strive to inspire more meaningful and intentional connections between youth and adults. The efforts also promote cross-sector collaborations to weave a thicker community net where youth can find hope, safety and support. The groups work to reduce youth substance use through collaboration and environmental change. The coalition's Youth Resiliency Team looks to bring the youth perspective to work being done in the community through events and more. In 2023, 116 youth participated in the Youth Resiliency Team.



The coalitions continue their monthly meetings as virtual and in-person events. The hybrid approach provides the much needed face-to-face community interactions while lending flexibility to those who may not be able to participate in person.

THE DATA

Cape May County Healthy Communities Coalition (HCC)

38 coalition activities **≈590** youth reached

260 coalition members **≈146** organizations reached

≈4045 adults reached **25** schools reached

Lower Township Healthy Youth Coalition (LTHYC)

21 coalition activities **≈2155** individuals reached

167 coalition members **≈30** organizations reached



2023 Highlights

Fundraising and Donations

- Total fundraising was \$82,768, which is a growth of 150% since 2020

Program Service

- *Mental Health First Aid Training* - 369 individuals trained, a 468% increase from 2022
- *TIPS Training* - 194 individuals were trained
- *Botvin: LifeSkills* - 5 schools and 1,231 students were reached
- *Police and EMS Camps* - 5 camps were offered and hosted roughly 190 students
- *Hope One NARCAN Training* - 999 individuals were trained, a 261% increase from 2022

Counseling Program

- The counseling program served over 124 individuals, with more than half completing their goals
- The number of people served who have not completed or will not complete treatment dropped from 63 in 2022 to 44 in 2023

Population Serviced

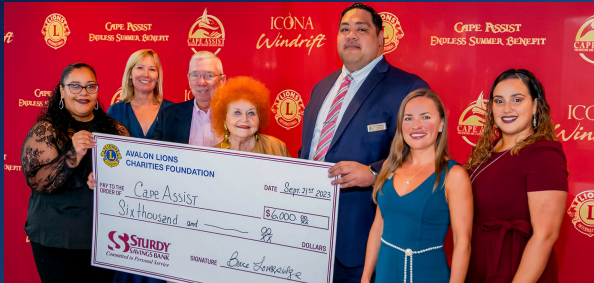
- Over 180 schools and businesses reached
- Over 3500 youth reached
 - Youth within the county became increasingly more involved in 2023 and participated in many different projects, including creating and setting up library displays, the GASO social media contest, and Rid Ribbon Week
 - Over 500 youths were taught the dangers of vaping using the Don't Get Vaped In Jeopardy game created by the Youth Resiliency Team
 - Over 20 youths attended the Incorruptible.US statewide event held at I Play America, hosted by NJ Prevention Network
 - Roughly ten youths were trained in the Rinsey Curriculum
 - The Youth Resiliency Team held seven summer events for over 200 youth, including a fishing trip, laser tag with local police officers, Police Academy Day, Self-Care Saturday, a beach day and an etiquette lesson followed by a dinner. These events provide youth with a safe, drug-free environment to spend time with friends as well as an opportunity to meet new people who live throughout the county



PARTNERSHIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Cape Assist understands that community partnerships anchor any successful social service agency. Cape May County is a tight-knit and supportive area that benefits when organizations join forces for the greater good. Other local non-profit organizations and groups can support Cape Assist's objectives and mission by concentrating on community education and fostering a secure environment for raising awareness about substance misuse, thereby creating opportunities for impactful collaborations.

AVALON LIONS CLUB



The Avalon Lions Club is made of up over 90 civic-minded individuals bound together under the Lions Clubs International. They meet "To Serve" their community and its needs with fundraising and other community service events. These members are active in their communities as medical professionals, first responders, attorneys, teachers, business personnel, boat captains, realtors, municipal officials, and more. The organization has donated over \$50,000 to Cape Assist and its mission, more specifically toward the Endless Summer benefit.

CAPE MAY COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

The Cape May County Health Department is a state-run department dedicated to serving individuals in Cape May County. It is made up of multiple departments that offer a wide variety of services from mental health education and community outreach to COVID and FLU vaccine clinics.

The department recently donated a dedicated space at their facility to Cape Assist and the organization's professionals to serve as a Cape Assist satellite office twice a week.



GREG DiANTONIO MEMORIAL FUND

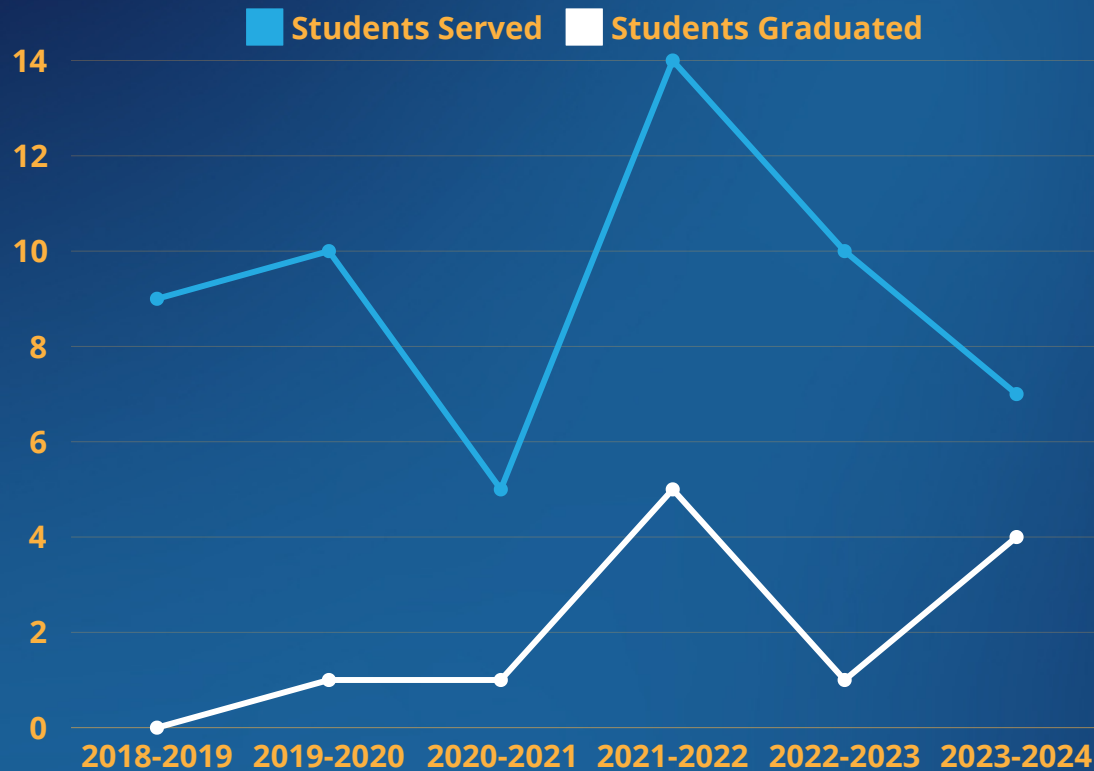
The Greg DiAntonio Memorial Fund, run by Kreni and Pat DiAntonio in honor of their son, helps raise funding and awareness to advocate for individuals dealing with substance misuse. The fund provides strong support for recovery, community service, and destigmatizing these issues for families and friends alike.



As a longtime supporter of Cape Assist and Coastal Prep Recovery High School, the memorial fund has donated over \$30,000 to both the organization and the recovery high school over the years.

'Recovery High School, a safe haven for teens struggling with addiction

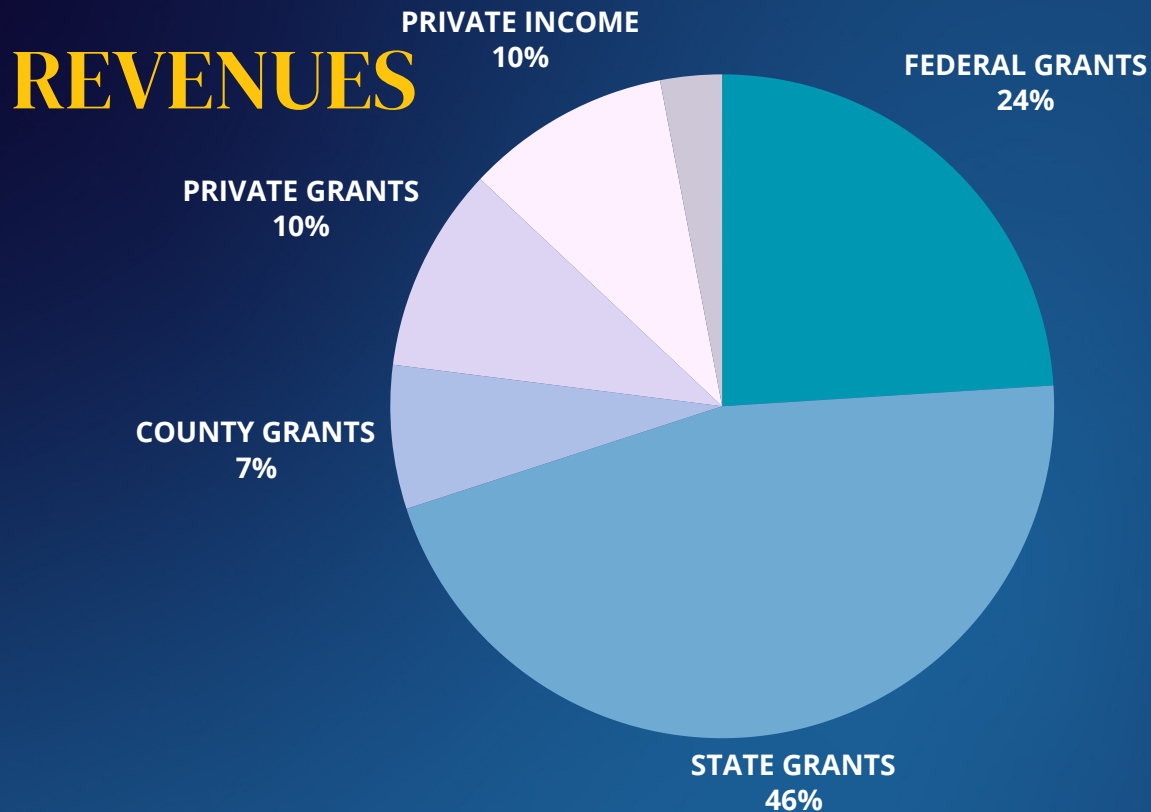
Since 2019, Coastal Preparatory High School has provided students with a safe, non-judgmental environment where they can continue their education and receive recovery support. The unique setting makes it easy for students to find a sense of belonging and develop lasting connections with their teachers, counselors, and peers that contribute to recovery success. As one of only three recovery high schools in New Jersey, Coastal Prep helps students focus on setting goals, learning life skills and mediation. School costs are offset by a state grant.



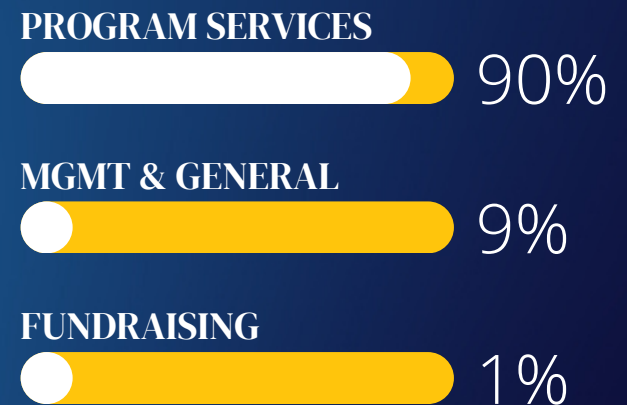
Students receive recovery support in a group setting along with a minimum of weekly individual meetings with recovery mentors/licensed staff to discuss and update their own recovery plans, which can include preparing to return to their district schools.

Students are exposed to other areas of growth, such as classes on Life Skills, Art, dual credit college courses, and recreational activities to enrich all aspects of their lives. Efforts to improve self-esteem and community engagement are enhanced by students' self-selection of volunteer opportunities.

REVENUES & EXPENSES



EXPENSES



MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Counseling Goals for Clients

GOALS COMPLETED



GOALS IN PROGRESS



Quit Center

123 INDIVIDUALS WHO UTILIZED SERVICES

45 INDIVIDUALS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAM (IN 6 SESSIONS)

249 PARTICIPANTS WHO UTILIZED NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT) THROUGH THE QUIT CENTER

**JOIN US
FOR
CAPE
ASSIST'S
BIGGEST
EVENT
OF THE
YEAR**



SAVE THE DATE


CAPE ASSIST
PREVENTING AND TREATING SUBSTANCE MISUSE

10th annual
**ENDLESS
SUMMER**
benefit

THURSDAY, 19
SEPTEMBER
6 PM - 9PM

ICONA WINDRIFT
FOOD. ENTERTAINMENT.
CASH BAR. AUCTION.

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