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## Hope Rocks Festival seeks to aid those threatened by addiction, suicide



Joe Defino, the founder and executive of Hope Rocks, stands outside a tent at the festival on Saturday, Aug. 14, at Cantine Field in Saugerties, N.Y. DIANE PINEIRO-ZUCKER — DAILY FREEMAN

By **DIANE PINEIRO-ZUCKER** | [dpineiro-zucker@freemanonline.com](mailto:dpineiro-zucker@freemanonline.com) | Daily Freeman

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SAUGERTIES, N.Y. — The Hope Rocks Festival Saturday, Aug. 14, at Cantine Field was filled with the sound of music, the aroma of festival food, and tables staffed with volunteers and information aimed at combating addiction and suicide.

Hope Rocks founder and executive director Joe Defino, a Saugerties resident and a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Grant E. Morse Elementary School, said the festival he founded in 2016 is part of “a movement to illuminate the darkness of addiction and suicide.”



“And I know that sounds trite and simple,” Defino added. “But in order to reverse the trend of overdose and suicide you really need to gather as a community and attack the problem as a community. You can’t do this as if it were the lot of the government to take care of.”

Defino said he hopes attendees Saturday and Sunday realize they can avail themselves of services in the community “and see themselves as part of a larger community that understands their struggles, because we all know somebody who has a connection to someone who’s either suffering from addiction or committed suicide. We all have to deal with that.”

Defino said he brought Hope Rocks to Saugerties after “I started noticing that kids that I had taught were dying from overdose and addiction. In 2013 my eyes became open to it. In 2016, I said we have to do something. My role as an educator is not to see 17-, 18-, 19-, 20-year-old wonderful kids die because they feel there’s no hope.”

The organization started in Saugerties but now has a much broader focus, he said.

Tables staffed by volunteers and staff from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Alcoholics Anonymous, Samadhi, state Sen. Michelle Hinchey’s office, the Institute for Family Health, Narcotics Anonymous, Astor Services for Children and Families, Step One, and others are featured in the festival’s Hope Village tent and can be accessed rain or shine.

Hope Rocks continues on Sunday with live music, food, crafters, art exhibitions, and attractions, as well as presentations and programs designed to assist, support and encourage recovery.

Attendees may receive free Narcan training at the Opioid Response as County Law Enforcement (O.R.A.C.L.E.) van operated by the Ulster County Sheriff’s Office. Everyone who completes the 20-minute training provided by a member of the Sheriff’s Office will leave with a Narcan kit containing two doses of the life-saving drug, and the ability to save the life of someone who overdoses on opioids.

On Saturday, Officer Pat Carroll, who had trained nine attendees by mid-afternoon, said he is passionate about Narcan and its power to save lives and educate people about the importance and safety of what he describes as a “miracle drug ... that only works on opioids.”

There will be free and open recovery meetings at the festival on Sunday of Narcotics Anonymous at 11 a.m.; Refuge Recovery: A Buddhist path to recovery from addiction at 1 p.m.; Alcoholics Anonymous at 3 p.m.; and an open meeting for those affected by a loved one’s struggle with addiction at 4:30 p.m. All meetings on Sunday will be 90 minutes long.

Admission to the Hope Rocks Festival is free.

## Suicide hotlines

In Ulster County, the Family of Woodstock Crisis Hotline number is (845) 338-2370. In Dutchess County, the 24-hour helpline number is (845) 485-9700.

The National Suicide Hotline number is (800) 273-8255.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number is (800) 273-8255. For LGBT-specific services, the Trevor Lifeline is (866) 488-7386.

Editor’s note: This story was updated Aug. 14, 2021, at 7:05 p.m. to correct the spelling of Samadhi.



**Diane Pineiro-Zucker**





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