

RECOVERY MONTH ACTIVITIES

**Recovery
Advocacy Toolkit**

MAKING OUR VOICES COUNT

RECOVERY MONTH ACTIVITIES

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (www.recoverymonth.gov) is observed each September and is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) and national planning partners, including Faces & Voices of Recovery and over one hundred public and private organizations and agencies.

Each year, there is a new theme for *Recovery Month*, when people join together and celebrate recovery with friends, family, policymakers, and others and encourage people to take action in their community. The 2008 theme, Real People, Real Recovery provides a platform for educating the public about the reality of recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs and resources for those seeking help and recovery. Tens of thousands of people participate each year, organizing and attending large and small events like walks, town hall meetings, picnics, concerts, and public policy panels.

There are so many events going on around the country that it's a good idea to coordinate with the activities of other organizations. Cross-check your events with others, locally and nationwide. Post your event information on the Recovery Month Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov to let other people know about what you're doing, invite others to your event and build collaboration. You can also download the National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month Kit from the site. The kit is full of information and resources to prepare and plan for *Recovery Month* activities in your community.

Recovery Month observances are one way to educate the public that addiction is a national public health crisis; that long-term recovery is possible; and that people from all walks of life are in recovery across the country, benefiting individuals, families and communities. The month-long activities highlight the many ways that people are finding recovery in our nation. Educating the public and putting a face and a voice on recovery gives hope and helps change public attitudes by increasing understanding about the reality of long-term recovery from addiction.

RALLY FOR RECOVERY

Since 2006, Faces & Voices of Recovery has worked with recovery community organizations and their allies across the United States to come together on the same day – the third Saturday in September – to plan events to celebrate recovery and make their voices count by advocating for specific issues and policy changes. In 2007, the issue was ending insurance discrimination facing people with addiction and mental illness. In 2008, the issue is nonpartisan civic engagement in the 2008 elections.

Rally for Recovery! events are organized all across the country, with one event serving as the “hub.” In 2007, a coalition of groups organized by Friends of Addiction Recovery New Jersey brought people together in Liberty State Park, New Jersey, where people listened to music, registered to vote, e-mailed their elected officials, signed petitions and celebrated recovery. Over 30,000 people attended 60 events that year. In 2008, the Rally for Recovery “hub” will be the “Hands Across the Bridge” event in St. Louis, Missouri. Each Rally for Recovery! event reflects the interests of organizers, frequently combining family activities like face painting and food with advocacy activities like walks around the State Capitol and voter registration drives.

The first “Hands Across the Bridge” Labor Day walk was organized by the Recovery Association Project (RAP) (www.rap-nw.org) in Portland, Oregon in 1999. Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) (www.ccar-us) held its first Recovery Walks in 2002. By holding walks, picnics and rallies on the same day under the umbrella of Rally for Recovery! we are raising our national profile and marking a new stage in the recovery advocacy movement. Each year's activities surpass the previous year's in both numbers and clout. For more information about Rally for Recovery! and to register your event, visit www.facesandvoicesorrecovery.org. For information on how you can be part of our organizing network, email info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

Please see the “Event Planning Guides” and “Media Outreach” sections of the Recovery Advocacy Toolkit for ideas about how to plan and promote your Recovery Month and Rally for Recovery! events.