Pieces of Hope by Erin Egloff, B.A.

upport and encouragement during treatment and recovery can have a significant impact on an individual's experience. Programs have embraced the successful peer model in recent years, with Certified Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA) work now approved as "Medicaid reimbursable" in settings approved by New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS). Anti-stigma community awareness campaigns offered by NCADD-RA, harm reduction efforts, and an acknowledgement of Substance Use Disorder as a treatable medical condition are moving us away from misinformation and into a culture of parity and compassion.

Still, individuals in recovery continue to face feelings of shame in the public sphere, and it can be difficult to see tangible evidence of community support when public funding is insufficient, healthcare employees have massive workloads, and culturally responsive programs are underfunded. To stimulate conversations with community members and demonstrate cohesive support for those in treatment and recovery, the Finger Lakes Addiction Resource Center (FLARC) at NCADD-RA has engaged people across the region through our participation in a wide variety of health/resource fairs to actively participate in a small, colorful effort.

Each of the FLARC Hope Puzzles contain messages from 96 people demonstrating their encouragement of loved ones and neighbors in recovery. The first puzzle was completed during Rochester's Jordan Health Front Porch Festival in July and the Genesee-Orleans-Wyoming Opioid Task Force's Overdose Awareness Day Event in August, held in Batavia. The second puzzle began on the first day of September at the 7th Annual Scotty B. Overdose Awareness Day in Rochester and will continue to travel throughout the Finger Lakes collecting messages of support from community members. Folks who identified themselves as in sustained recovery have shared that "if I can do it, you can too!" Children eagerly drew pictures and wrote their names to show that they wanted their neighbors to feel better and added some welcome humor with practical advice such as "don't do drugs, find some food." A little boy made his mother beam with pride when he wrote a special message just for her: "Mom, it's ok every day."

The first puzzle has been proudly displayed in the NCADD-RA lobby, and subsequent puzzles will be gifted to regional programs for patients and clients to enjoy.

