



🕒 □ December 2025 HVMHC Newsletter □ ❄️



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**Erik Sievers, MBA, MSW, LICSW  
HVMHC Executive Director**

## **A Word From our Executive Director; Erik Sievers: Highlighting Strong Governance - Our Board's Annual Meeting**

On November 10, 2025, Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center held its annual Board of Directors meeting—an important moment each year to reflect on our mission, celebrate progress, and look ahead with clarity and purpose. Strong governance is essential to our work, and our board plays a vital role in ensuring that we remain grounded in our mission while navigating the opportunities and challenges facing community mental health.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our dedicated Board Members from across our five-county region. Their commitment, guidance, and stewardship help ensure that HVMHC continues to provide exceptional, responsive, and person-centered behavioral health services throughout southeastern Minnesota.

To each of our board members: thank you for the time you give, the expertise you offer, and the passion you bring to supporting the wellbeing of our communities. Your leadership strengthens our organization and helps us stay true to our mission every day.

**Be Well-Erik**

## **2025 HVMHC Board of Directors**

**Pictured Below include (left to right):** Mich Lentz: Fillmore County Commissioner; Teresa O'Donnell-Ebner: Houston County Community Member; Erik Sievers: Executive Director; Mary Polus: Winona County Community Member; Dwayne Voegeli: Winona County Commissioner; Mike Wobbe: Wabasha County Commissioner; Brad Anderson: Goodhue County Commissioner; Mandy Hansel: Winona County Community Member; Denise McDowell: Winona County Community Member; Marie Kovacs: Winona County Community Member; Juile Kiehne: Fillmore County Community Member; Cindy Wright: Houston County Commissioner



**Hiawatha Valley**  
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

**Crisis Response**

**1-844-272-7472**

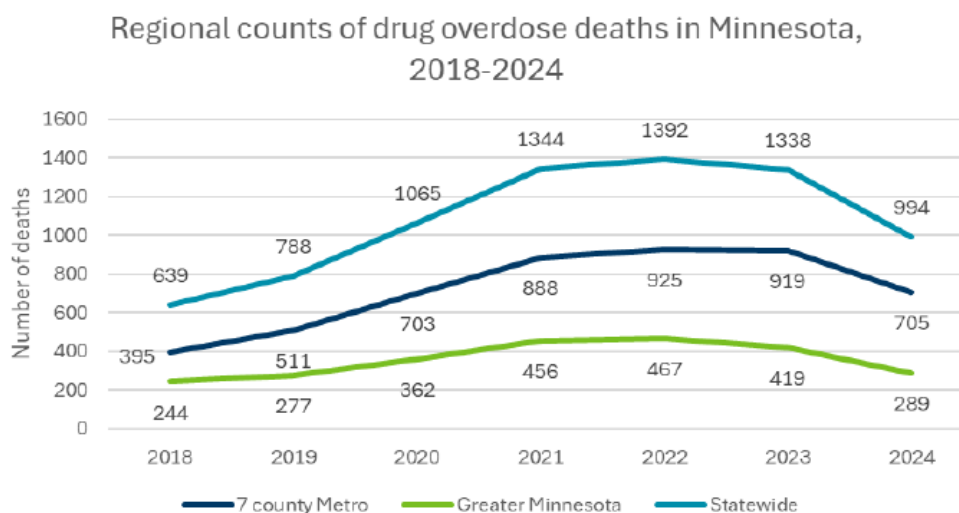
## HVMHC Strengthens Community Support Through Mobile Crisis Services

Winona, Minn — Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center (HVMHC) is proud to highlight the growing impact of its **Mobile Crisis Services**, available 24/7 to individuals of all ages experiencing a mental health crisis across southeastern Minnesota. Anyone in need can call **844-274-7472** to reach trained mental health staff who provide immediate, compassionate, and confidential support.

## A Message From SUD: Deaths by Overdose Drop for 2nd Consecutive Year in MN

### MINNESOTA DRUG OVERDOSE LANDSCAPE IN 2024

Figure 1. Notable decreases seen across Minnesota in 2024



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Minnesota Department of Health, 2018-2024

### From the Minnesota Department of Health:

For the second year in a row, Minnesota saw a drop in overdose deaths and hospitalizations. Overdose deaths decreased 26%, from 2023 to 2024, while hospital-treated nonfatal overdoses decreased 19%. These decreases were seen in nearly every region of the state and across demographics.

The largest decrease in overdose deaths, 31%, occurred in Greater Minnesota counties, while metro counties experienced a 23% decrease.

In 2024, opioid-involved deaths in Minnesota decreased by 32%, including a 35% decline in synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl. All other opioid-related categories, including prescribed opioids, heroin, and methadone, continued to decline. Nonfatal overdoses also decreased across all other substance categories, with nearly 15 nonfatal overdoses treated in hospitals for every one overdose death. This downward trend reflects a national pattern and underscores the effectiveness of sustained prevention and overdose prevention strategies.

[Read the Full Report](#)

2025  
**JINGLE BELL  
BATTLE**

**NOV 24 - DEC 19**

VOTE  
FOR OUR

*Movie*



**Hiawatha Valley**  
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER  
Crisis Response  
1-844-272-7472



ONE LUCKY VOTER WILL WIN A  
MALL OF AMERICA PRIZE PACKAGE



**Q-MEDIAGROUP.COM**

### Jingle Bell Battle

The Jingle Bell Battle kicked off the week of Thanksgiving in Red Wing, and we need YOU to help us sleigh the competition! Voting is online, so everyone can join in. Cast your vote for HVMHC (A Christmas Story) each week—voting resets every Monday. Let's jing-le all the way to the win!

**Vote Here**

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HVMHC staff Kelly (blue shirt, black vest) drops off warm weather clothing at the Winona Day Center. Warm weather clothing was the October monthly giveback program.

## December's Monthly Giveback: Food Drive

At Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center, giving back is at the heart of who we are. Our monthly Giveback Program allows staff, clients, and community members to come together in support of our neighbors across the region.

As we enter December, we recognize that the need for food assistance is greater

than ever. For this reason, we will continue our November food drive through the end of December.

Throughout this extended effort, HVMHC will be collecting boxed and canned, non-perishable food items to help ensure individuals and families have access to nutritious meals during the winter months.

Donations can be dropped off at any HVMHC clinic in Caledonia, Red Wing, Wabasha, or Winona through December 31. Every contribution—large or small—helps support those facing food insecurity during the holiday season and beyond. Thank you for your continued generosity and for helping us make a meaningful difference in our communities.



# December FOOD DRIVE

Throughout the month of December, we're collecting non-perishable food donations to help stock food shelves and support families in need across the counties we serve.

## DROP OFF LOCATIONS

611 Broadway Ave, Ste. 100 Wabasha, MN 55981	420 East Sarnia St. Winona, MN 55987	221 South Kingston St. Caledonia, MN 55921	2835 S. Service Dr. Ste. 103 Red Wing, MN 55066
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**MOST NEEDED ITEMS:**

- Canned meats (tuna, chicken, or salmon)
- Peanut butter (or other nut butters)
- Canned fruits & vegetables
- Canned soups, stews, or chili
- Rice, pasta, or beans
- Baby formula and baby food

PLEASE CHECK EXPIRATION DATES BEFORE DONATING

 Questions?

JEN DIECK - JEND@HVMHC.ORG  
KELLY NICOLAI - KELLYN@HVMHC.ORG



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## Celebrating Employee Milestones

### Welcome New Hires:

11/3 - Jackie Horman  
Office Manager - Winona  
11/10 - Will Onstad  
Housing Support Assistant  
11/17 - Lucy Latawiec  
Psychiatry Intern

### Workaversaries:

12/2 - Kristina Rohrer - 12th  
12/6 - Madeline Beuning - 4th  
12/9 - Sam Schamun - 1st  
12/10 - Elizabeth Hansen - 1st  
12/10 - Erika Westfield - 1st

### Workaversaries Cont:

12/12 - Kelly Clouse - 3rd  
12/16 - Brianna Corey - 1st  
12/19 - Emily Schossow - 3rd  
12/20 - Morgan Popp - 12th

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## Open Position Spotlight: Adult Mental Health Practitioner - Winona & Red Wing

Join Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center to provide community-based services for adults with mental health conditions. This role includes case management, teaching life skills, and connecting clients with resources to support recovery.

We're looking for a compassionate, motivated professional who meets MN requirements for a Mental Health Practitioner and can travel throughout SE Minnesota.

Benefits include paid leave, tuition support, medical/dental/vision, retirement contributions, and more.

**Learn More; Apply Today**

[View all HVMHC Job Openings](#)

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## Need Help? HVMHC's 24/7 Crisis Line is Here

HVMHC's 24/7 Emergency Crisis Response Line connects individuals in mental health or substance use crises with trained professionals—anytime, day or night.

Why it matters:

- Immediate, judgment-free support
- Reduces ER visits and hospitalizations
- Available to individuals, families, and community partners
- In-person or phone response based on need
- FREE & Confidential

☐ **Call 1-800-CRISIS2 or 1-800-274-7472—we're here when it matters most.**

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**A Message From HVMHC's Mobile Crisis Team**

# CRISIS NEWSLETTER

SIERRA SCHIER

DECEMBER  
2025

## UNDERSTANDING THE WINTER BLUES

### "WINTER BLUES"

As daylight hours shorten and temperatures drop, many people experience what's commonly known as the "winter blues." This seasonal dip in mood can include low energy, difficulty concentrating, increased fatigue, and decreased motivation. While mild mood changes are common, some individuals experience more significant impacts—including Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Winter can also amplify feelings of loneliness, isolation, and stress, especially for those already navigating mental health challenges.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



## MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN THE WINTER

The winter season often brings additional stressors: financial strain, grief, strained family dynamics, and reminders of loved ones lost. These pressures can intensify:

- Depression and suicidal ideation
- Substance use or relapse risk
- Anxiety or panic symptoms
- Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness
- Emotional overwhelm

For individuals experiencing ongoing crisis or chronic stress, these seasonal factors can make symptoms more difficult to manage. Any increase in distress is valid and deserves support.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), NIMH

## SEEKING HELP

Seek help or encourage others to seek support if any of the following are present:

- Persistent sadness or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Major changes in sleep or appetite
- Social withdrawal
- Thoughts of self harm or suicide

Crisis is defined by distress—not severity. Anyone struggling deserves compassionate support.



SOURCES: NIMH (DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION), SAMHSA

# FILLING YOUR CUP & SUPPORTING OTHERS

## EMOTIONAL RESTORATION

Winter is a time to intentionally refill your emotional cup.

Consider:

- Setting boundaries around time and energy
- Saying "no" to draining obligations
- Allowing yourself rest without guilt
- Doing comforting activities: reading, warm drinks, music, journaling
- Practicing gratitude or mindful appreciation of small moments



Your emotional well being matters. You can't pour from an empty cup.

## SUPPORTING OTHERS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE

A PROFESSIONAL TO

SUPPORT SOMEONE

FACING MENTAL

HEALTH CHALLENGES.

YOU CAN:

- Ask open ended check ins ("How are you really doing?")
- Validate feelings and experiences
- Listen without judgement or advice giving
- Encourage professional help when needed
- Offer practical support like a ride, meal, or quiet space

CONNECTION IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST PROTECTIVE FACTORS AGAINST CRISIS.

SOURCES: CDC (SOCIAL CONNECTIONS), SAMHSA (CRISIS SUPPORT GUIDANCE)

## CRISIS RESOURCES

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, CALL US: **1-844-CRISIS2**

**(1-844-274-7472)**

24/7

OR

**988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**





# Employee Spotlight

**Shari Fusillo**

Title: LPCC

**Tell us about yourself:**

I started my career as a teacher at a high school and taught Speech, Radio and TV. I enjoyed meeting with students one on one before and after school so decided to go to graduate school to become an elementary school counselor. I did that for years and then got pregnant with twins so took 5 years off of working to raise them. Following that I got the job with this agency as a Skills Worker and eventually shifted over to a therapist. In my free time I enjoy exercising, being outside, spending time with my family and friends as well as traveling.

**Tell us how long you've worked at HVMHC, what your role is and what your favorite part of working here is:**

I have been at HVMHC for 8 years as of March 2025. I started as a Skills worker then added in case management. After I completed my LPCC I shifted over to the Out Patient Department. I love working with clients to help make their lives better in some way.

**Tell us something about you that people might be surprised to know or your favorite memory from this year:**

My favorite memories this year were of my daughter getting married and my son writing a book.



Shari and Family

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## Donor Spotlight: Lake City Lions Club Donates \$1,000 to Support HVMHC Peer Support Networks



**Pictured: HVMHC Executive Director Erik Sievers (left) accepts a \$1,000 check from Wayne Heise (\$1,000) on behalf of the Lake City Lions Club**

Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center is grateful to the Lake City Lions Club for their generous \$1,000 donation in November. This gift directly supports our community-based Peer Support Networks (PSNs), with \$500 designated for the Red Wing PSN and \$500 for the Wabasha PSN. HVMHC's Peer Support Networks provide welcoming spaces where individuals can connect with others who have lived experience with mental health challenges. These peer-led environments offer social support, recovery-focused activities, skill-building opportunities, and a sense of belonging—free of charge and open to all community members.

The Lions' contribution helps ensure our PSNs can continue offering meaningful programming, outreach, and support to individuals on their recovery journeys.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Lake City Lions Club for investing in the well-being of our communities.

**Donate to Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center Today**

# Winter

## WINTER CLOTHING GIVEAWAY & RESOURCE FAIR – FREE FOR ALL!

Stop by for Hot Chocolate and Popcorn as you get clothes for the chilly weather ahead.



### Pick-Up Date:

Friday,  
December 5th  
10am-4pm



### Pick Up Location

611 Broadway  
Ave Suite 100,  
Wabasha, MN  
55981

*(Arrive through the food  
share doors)*

### Sponsors





WINONA AREA TOYS FOR KIDS *presents*

# 2025 ANNUAL FREE TOY STORE

DECEMBER 13TH, 2025

8:00 AM TO NOON

MORRISON ANNEX  
EVENT CENTER

363 E 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET  
WINONA, MINNESOTA

NO FINANCIAL  
VERIFICATION  
NECESSARY



WE SERVE CHILDREN 12 AND UNDER



REGISTRATION *required!*

[WATFK.ORG/REGISTER](http://WATFK.ORG/REGISTER)



WINONA AREA TOYS FOR KIDS

WINONAAREATOYSFORKIDS@GMAIL.COM

Upcoming HVMHC Trainings

Community

# Naloxone Training



During this **FREE** training, you'll learn:



How to recognize an opioid overdose



All about naloxone (NARCAN)



About Steve's Law (MN's Good Samaritan and Naloxone Legislation)

PLUS:



See a demo of naloxone administration



Get your own naloxone kit!



Wednesday,  
December 17th  
3:30pm-5:00pm



Houston Community Center  
111 W Cedar St  
Houston, MN 55943

Questions? Please contact:

Jen Dieck

[jend@HVMHC.org](mailto:jend@HVMHC.org)

This training is hosted by:

Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center



For the link to a full list of Community Trainings offered by HVMHC [Click Here](#)

Schedule an Appointment with  
HVMHC





Try email & social marketing for free!