



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Virginia Festival of the Book & the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition partner for virtual programming in honor of National Recovery Month**

August 31, 2021—Charlottesville, Va.—The [Virginia Festival of the Book](#) and the [Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition](#) announced today that they will partner to present ***Undoing Drugs: Conversations about Harm Reduction***, a two-part series of FREE virtual programs on **Thursday, September 30** (International Recovery Day) in honor of **National Recovery Month**. The events include:

### **Shelf Life—*Undoing Drugs: A Conversation with Maia Szalavitz*** **Thursday, September 30 at 12:00 PM ET**

*A FREE virtual event presented on Zoom and Facebook Live; presented with captions*

**Maia Szalavitz**, author of [Undoing Drugs: The Untold Story of Harm Reduction and the Future of Addiction](#), discusses the story of harm reduction and its potential to tame the opioid crisis, mitigate future drug problems, and quell other pandemics, in conversation with **Lawson Koepfel, MSW**, co-founder of **Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition**.

Szalavitz is an award-winning journalist who specializes in science and health. She is also the author of *Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction*, as well as *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*, with Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D. She lives in New York City.

Koepfel is a person in long-term recovery whose focus is on active substance use, policy, and mental health. He co-founded Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition (VHRC) in 2018 to empower people who use drugs to prevent overdose deaths, and promote other evidence-based solutions to address the effects of drug use. VHRC has distributed more than 80,000 doses of naloxone.

A video recording, with transcript, will also be available for on-demand viewing after the live event. *Additional community partners for this event include the Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition.*

**Register and learn more details at [VaBook.org/Schedule](https://va-book.org/schedule)**

### ***Undoing Drugs: A Conversation with Local Harm Reduction Champions and Providers*** **Thursday, September 30 at 4:00 PM ET**

*A FREE virtual event presented on Zoom and Facebook Live*

A panel discussion with local harm reduction champions, moderated by **Erin Tucker**, executive director of **On Our Own**, a peer recovery center that provides support, understanding and resources to adults in our community as they pursue their own unique paths to recovery. **Register and learn more details at [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAufuirqzwrHd353K2ZzBFy2BRsHXOhzw\\_5](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAufuirqzwrHd353K2ZzBFy2BRsHXOhzw_5)**

**Additional local programming for National Recovery Month in September:**

The Community Mental Health & Wellness Coalition is coordinating and promoting community activities that focus on reducing the harmful impacts of substance use and promoting overall recovery and wellbeing. September events include: REVIVE overdose reversal training with Region Ten, free Narcan drive-thru with the Blue Ridge Health District, local on-going recovery support groups and more. To see a list of activities visit [helphappenshere.org/nationalrecoverymonth](http://helphappenshere.org/nationalrecoverymonth).

**About National Recovery Month:**

Now in its 32nd year, **National Recovery Month** celebrates the gains made by those in recovery, just as we celebrate improvements made by those who are managing other health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. Each September, participating organizations highlight work to promote and support new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, the emergence of a strong and proud recovery community, and the dedication of service providers and community members across the nation who make recovery in all its forms possible. To learn more, visit <https://rm.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>.

**About the Community Mental Health & Wellness Coalition (CMHWC):**

The CMHWC is a network of more than twenty-five diverse organizations that work together to improve mental health and substance use outcomes for Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson Counties. Members include service providers, criminal justice providers, health care providers, and people with lived experience. The coalition collaborates and advocates for increased access to mental health and substance use services, addresses institutional racism, and seeks progress on the community level. To learn more, visit: [Facebook.com/CommunityMentalHealthAndWellnessCoalition](https://Facebook.com/CommunityMentalHealthAndWellnessCoalition).

**About the Virginia Festival of the Book:**

A signature program of Virginia Humanities and the Virginia Center for the Book, the Virginia Festival of the Book brings readers and writers together for author readings, panel discussions, programs for children, and more. The 28th annual Virginia Festival of the Book will take place, March 16-20, 2022, with additional details announced as they are confirmed. To learn more, visit [VaBook.org](http://VaBook.org).

**About Virginia Humanities:**

Virginia Humanities is the state humanities council. We aim to share the stories of all Virginians—or, better yet, find ways for people to share their own stories. We want to connect Virginians with their history and culture and, in doing that, help us all get to know each other a little better. We are headquartered in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia but our work covers the Commonwealth. To learn more, visit [VirginiaHumanities.org](http://VirginiaHumanities.org).

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