

Independent Perspective #1921  
Kites and Kindness with Kevin Smith

## Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

I'm your host, Tracy LeBlanc, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:11 Speaker 1

Winnows Mental Health Peer Connection hosts activities and events designed to bring the community together with a mental health and wellness focus.

00:00:20 Speaker 1

The annual Kites and Kindness Cookout is one of those events.

00:00:24 Speaker 1

Joining us today to talk about MHPC's Kites and Kindness Cookout is the Director of Mental Health Peer Connection, Kevin Smith.

00:00:31 Speaker 1

Welcome to the program, Kevin.

00:00:33 Speaker 2

Thank you for having me.

00:00:35 Speaker 1

Can you provide us with an overview of what Mental Health Peer Connection is?

00:00:39 Speaker 2

Well, Mental Health Peer Connection is a peer-run behavioral health program or agency within Western New York Independent Living's family of agency.

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Everyone on my team,

00:00:52 Speaker 2

identify as a peer or a person with lived experience in mental health and or substance abuse.

00:00:57 Speaker 1

Great.

00:00:58 Speaker 1

Let's talk about the Kites and Kindness Cookout.

00:01:00 Speaker 1

How did this event start and what do you hope attendees take away from the day?

00:01:05 Speaker 2

This event started, it actually started, it predates me as director of Mental Health Peer Connection.

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Probably goes back to when I was actually a direct service.

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I want to say

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about 2000, the mid 2000, maybe 2014, 2015.

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But my earliest remembrance is 2016.

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It actually started at Grantwick Park and it was called the MHPC Kite Festival.

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And the goal was simple, just to bring people together outdoors for fun, welcoming day.

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And over time it just grew and we changed the name to the Kites and Kindness Cookout.

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But the heart is still the same, creating connection through kindness and community.

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And we believe that kindness and connection are powerful tools as it relates to mental health.

00:01:56 Speaker 1

Who can attend this event?

00:01:58 Speaker 2

Everybody.

00:02:01 Speaker 2

Even though we promoted a lot internally with the people that get services from MHPC and Western New York Independent Living, it's a family friendly event and it's open to the whole community, so you don't have to be connected to us.

00:02:14 Speaker 2

If you're looking for a fun day outdoors, you're welcome.

00:02:18 Speaker 2

If you enjoy community, good food, and fun, this is the event for you.

00:02:24 Speaker 1

Great.

00:02:24 Speaker 1

Can you give us the date, time, and location of the event?

00:02:28 Speaker 2

The date, time, and location is going to be September 19th.

00:02:33 Speaker 2

We try to keep it the third Saturday of September as a rule.

00:02:39 Speaker 2

But it's going to be, like I said, September 19th, and it's going to be from 11 to 3, and it's going to be a Cheektowaga town park shelter number one on Harlem Road.

00:02:51 Speaker 2

And we'll have free hot dogs, kite flying and activities for all ages.

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People can bring their own kites or they can use one of ours.

00:02:59 Speaker 2

And it's really just a relaxed day to enjoy the food, fun and the community.

00:03:04 Speaker 2

And honestly, some of our best parts of the day are just those conversations and connections that people make.

00:03:10 Speaker 1

How can someone get more information or register for the Kites and Kindness Cookout?

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To RSVP or to ask about accommodations, people can call Christine at 716-836-0822, extension 146. If they're interested in volunteering or need transportation,

00:03:30 Speaker 2

they can call me at extension 147.

00:03:33 Speaker 2

Again, that number is 836-0822, extension 147.

00:03:39 Speaker 2

And we appreciate the RSVPs so we can plan, but everybody is welcome.

00:03:44 Speaker 2

And if you're a walk up, we're not going to turn you away.

00:03:48 Speaker 1

Great.

00:03:50 Speaker 1

Do you have to bring your own kite?

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You do not have to bring your own kite.

00:03:54 Speaker 2

If you choose to, that's fine.

00:03:55 Speaker 2

But we'll have plenty of kites to give out to everybody who wants to get one in the air free.

00:04:04 Speaker 1

What other activities are going on that day?

00:04:08 Speaker 2

We're going to have games.

00:04:10 Speaker 2

We're going to have games and coloring for the kids.

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There's going to be a beanbag toss or corhnole.

00:04:19 Speaker 2

There's going to be other games that

00:04:22 Speaker 2

you'll be able to play with staff or just individuals that are there enjoying the festivities.

00:04:29 Speaker 2

We're going to try to have something for everyone.

00:04:32 Speaker 2

But like I said earlier, the big thing is just connection and talking to people and enjoying the outdoors, a celebration of mental health awareness.

00:04:42 Speaker 1

Right.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

That's all the time we have for this week.

00:04:45 Speaker 1

You've been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:04:51 Speaker 1

Our guest today was Kevin Smith, the Director of Mental Health Peer Connection.

00:04:55 Speaker 1

And I have been your host, Tracy LeBlanc.