

Bring a memento of a loved one for New Bedford's "Overdose Awareness Day"

"Hello New Bedford Guide. My entire family is from New Bedford and I was born here. Though I spent a fair amount of time as a professional violinist, I committed to a year of service through the AmeriCorps VISTA program to try to make an impact where I am from on an issue that I think is important, and is personal to me: addiction.

I have been working this past year with the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative and the NBPD to help develop non-arrest pathways and improve health outcomes for people who suffer from addiction in New Bedford. This has really opened my eyes to some gaps in community knowledge around this issue, and one that disproportionately impacts New Bedford. 2021 had 43 reported overdoses, while the national average for 100,000 persons is around 28.6.

For Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, beyond having 517 LED candles at City Hall to visually represent the number of non-fatal overdoses that took place last year, I will be playing the violin as the procession enters Custom House Square and will also be having a table called "They Are Loved and Remembered," where friends, family, and loved ones who have lost someone to an overdose in New Bedford can bring a memento that belonged to their loved one or reminds them of them to keep their loved one's memory alive – and create a place of solidarity to meet one another who have been affected by the same tragedy.

The idea is to humanize the victims, create community dialogue, and create a space for individuals to connect with one another that have suffered through a similar tragedy and

may feel alone.

If possible, I want to open this up to more people in New Bedford so they could bring things to the event and find some community, but I simply do not have the reach you do. If you have a family member, friend, or loved one from New Bedford that passed away from an overdose, please come by.

If you have an item that belonged to them (and/or reminds you of them) and would like to have it displayed at the "They Are Loved and Remembered" table, please contact travis.recoverycorps@paariususa.org by Tuesday, August 30. The display will take place on August 31 at 5:00pm for Overdose Awareness Day at Custom House Square."-Travis Rapoza.