

716 Candles – Overview

Presented by Healthy Lincoln County in partnership with numerous programs and organizations, *716 Candles* is a program of events taking place across Lincoln County August 26 and August 31 to honor International Overdose Awareness Day.

The events offer diverse experiences and content with the goal of:

- honoring the lives of those lost to addiction;
- de-stigmatizing addiction by underscoring the humanity of those affected by it;
- building general awareness on matters related to addiction and the opioid epidemic;
- educating community on prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and paths to wellness;
- underscoring we are all in this together, and can all be a part of making things better

The events will be broadly marketed throughout Lincoln County, with the goal of engaging the general public as well as those overtly affected by substance use and the opioid epidemic. The promotion campaign in the months leading up to the events will include:

- developing graphics and a tagline to brand *716 Candles*
- creating a project landing page and Facebook page
- producing a social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram
- seeking and placing stories in Lincoln County media outlets
- placing fliers, banners, and posters throughout the county
- taking out paid ads and boosting social media posts
- encouraging partners to share *716 Candles* program information

A total of five events will take place in Damariscotta, Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Wiscasset, and Waldoboro. Each of these events is free and open to the public, and includes candle lighting and remembrance as a thematic through line.

On Saturday, August 26, two events take place.

The first of these takes place in Damariscotta (Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust is a possible location) from Noon to 5pm. The event features a family-friendly, upbeat program of music and speakers to celebrate “lights” of Lincoln County: those who are surviving substance use disorder and/or finding recovery, those who are working for the wellness of others, and those we’ve loved and lost. The event includes food and refreshments, addiction and community resource tables, art and wellness activities, back-to-school information, and more.

The second event is an art exhibition and youth performances/presentations taking place in Waldoboro (Medomak Valley High School is a possible location). Created in partnership with a youth cohort affected by substance use and its related challenges, the event features art giving voice to experiences of pain, loss, and love: one parent expressing through art grief over the loss of her child; another curating an exhibition of his daughter’s art tracing her path from emotional distress to death; a collection of youth-made art about experiences and beliefs, pains and hopes. This pop-up exhibition serves as a draw for families to come together, and once

assembled to bear witness to a series of youth presentations and performances, culminating in a candle-lighting ceremony to express hope and support for the next generation. This event includes food and refreshments, and addiction and community resource tables.

On August 31 – the date International Overdose Awareness Day is annually recognized – three events take place.

The first of these occurs in Boothbay (the Boothbay Commons is a probable location), 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. This event features a robust speaking program, including local and statewide policymakers, and a presentation line up focused on advancing the above-listed priority messaging topics. Similar to the August 26 Damariscotta event, music plays a central role, and the event includes addiction and wellness resource and activity tables.

As the opening event of the day winds down, attendees will be encouraged to make their way to Boothbay Harbor, where at 5:00 p.m. the day's second event will take place (The First Congregational church is a possible location). This event pairs 10 to 15 individuals who wish to remember their loved ones with poets, writers, and performers, each of whom reads or performs a piece following remarks honoring the deceased loved one. After each homage, a candle is lit, there is a minute of silence, and the event moves on to the next ode or elegy. Ceremonial and creatively uplifting, the event offers a deeply-expressed communal healing experience for all.

Also at 5:00 p.m., in Wiscasset as part of the monthly Wiscasset Art Walk, *716 Candles* will represent itself with a table-top art exhibition (this may or may not be the same content as in Waldoboro on August 26), a consolidated resource table, art and remembrance activities, and more. The precise content will be determined in partnership with Wiscasset Art Walk organizers, with the goal of broadly engaging a general public, inspiring empathy, understanding, and pathways to action to make things better.

From 8:00 to 9:00pm, to conclude *716 Candles* and the Wiscasset event (and in a manner to be determined (but involving walking, candles, and honoring the fortitude and resilience of those with addiction in recovery and living with its challenge every day), a ceremonial parade of lights will be held, terminating at a meaningful gathering place alit with 716 candles (the Sunken Garden or waterside spot are likely locations).

By its conclusion, *716 Candles* will have been experienced by hundreds, heard of by thousands, and may have lasting impact in shifting communal attitudes toward those affected by addiction and the opioid epidemic.