Michael McDonald Returns for NCADA’s 50th Anniversary

by Dan Duncan

His voice is distinctive, rich, unique, and soulful. The music he writes and performs is unforgettable and brilliant. His ability to touch audiences is undeniable.

If you’re a fan of the world-renowned, five-time Grammy winner Michael McDonald – his solo achievements and his transformational contributions to the Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan – make plans now to attend NCADA’s 50th Anniversary Concert on Saturday, August 22, at The Sheldon Concert Hall.

What better way for us to celebrate our 50th anniversary than to host St. Louis’ own Michael McDonald in a special one-night event at one of the area’s most comfortable concert venues? It will mark McDonald’s third benefit concert for NCADA in the past ten years, just one of the ways he has maintained his connection to the community where his talent took shape and began to blossom. His previous concerts for NCADA – one at The Pageant and one at the Touhill Performing Arts Center – sold out.

NCADA chose The Sheldon this year specifically for its intimate atmosphere and unmatched acoustics. “It’s an ideal setting for audiences to see an artist of Michael’s caliber,” said NCADA Executive Director Howard Weissman. Another St. Louis artist, R&B singer Brian Owens, will open the evening’s entertainment.

NCADA’s 50th Anniversary Concert featuring Michael McDonald is sponsored by Midwest BankCentre and KSDK Channel 5. Tickets are on sale now at Metrotix (metrotix.com or 314.534.111). A limited number of $150 VIP tickets, which include parking passes, are available through NCADA—please contact Angie Yarbrough (ayarbrough@ncada-stl.org or 314.962.3456 x352) to reserve yours now. Keep in mind that seating truly is limited, so don’t wait! You do not want to miss this special opportunity to see and hear one of the most distinctive and soulful singers of our time, the great Michael McDonald.

NCADA Golf Tournament Set for August 10

The NCADA Golf Tournament – a summer tradition since 1995 – will be held Monday, August 10 at The Country Club at St. Albans. All proceeds benefit NCADA’s programs for youths. Registration is $300, or $1,200 for foursomes. Sponsorships are welcome, and net donations of $1,000 or more are eligible for Missouri’s Youth Opportunities Program tax credits.

Register online at ncada-stl.org/events

For further information, including sponsorship benefits, contact Angie at (314) 962-3456 x352 or ayarbrough@ncada-stl.org.
Progress and persistence

That’s a record number of people – a record high number – paying the ultimate price for using these drugs. Some of them had developed an addiction and couldn’t stop. Others had been in the early stages of a treacherous experiment and were killed by an unexpectedly potent dose or perhaps a lethal mixture of substances.

Whatever the specifics, virtually all of them left shattered families to try to make sense of one of life’s most wrenching tragedies: the loss of a child.

Obituaries and death notices in these situations typically use phrases like “died suddenly at the age of 23….” But we know that people in their twenties do not, as a rule, die suddenly. We also know that more than 2,300 people in the St. Louis region have died “suddenly” for the same, usually unnamed, reason.

The overwhelming pain of loss feeds a need for the same, usually unnamed, reason.

For cures or for the problem to go away. The mere fact that, in anguish and desperation, a parent dared to tell the truth in the hope that another child might be spared, became newsworthy. The obituary went viral. Millions saw, shared, or commented on it.

It is an act of singular courage and love. And yes, it serves to reduce stigma and raise awareness. But make no mistake: it’s not progress, at least not the kind of progress we truly need.

Progress would involve a significant change in the way doctors treat pain and in the way we, as patients, manage it. Progress would involve coordinated efforts to teach our children that medications should be taken correctly — and sparingly. Progress would involve keeping legal drugs out of easy reach of our youth and rejecting the normalization of the use of more mind-altering substances. Progress would involve a persuasive public education campaign about safely disposing of unneeded medications.

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Fearless personality and her trademark red lipstick. Along Molly’s journey through life, she made a lot of bad decisions including experimenting with drugs. She fought her addiction to heroin for at least five years and had experienced a near fatal overdose before. Molly’s family truly loved her and tried to be as supportive as possible as she struggled with the heroin epidemic that has been so destructive to individuals and families in her age bracket….

If you have any loved ones who are fighting addiction, Molly’s family asks that you do everything possible to be supportive, and guide them to rehabilitation before it is too late.

It’s sad to say that this is what stands for progress in our field—that a heartbroken father disclosed the actual cause of his child’s overdose death —because, in one way, it reflects only how desperate the epidemic has become. Parents cannot wait for cures or for the problem to go away. The mere fact that, in anguish and desperation, a parent dared to tell the truth in the hope that another child might be spared, became newsworthy. The obituary went viral. Millions saw, shared, or commented on it.

An online tribute page for Molly Parks.

There are some who contend that heroin and prescription opioids have received more attention lately not just because of their lethality, but because they’re killing “good kids from good families” — code for “white kids in the suburbs.”

This is an insufficient and incomplete explanation. Substance use, misuse, and abuse is the number one public health problem in ALL neighborhoods across our region. In terms of social costs, nothing comes close. Until we begin to address it as a public health crisis — systematically, energetically, and persistently — too many communities will decay and too many parents, like the father of Molly Parks, will be faced with the unfathomably awful question of how much truth to include in their child’s obituary.

The time is now and the need is acute. If you want to join NCADA in this struggle, please contact us and learn more.

hweissman@ncada-stl.org

In the St. Louis region, four hundred of our youth people died from heroin/opiate overdoses in 2014.

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What Do I Know?

Commentary by Dan Duncan

The older I get, the less I seem to know. No, I’m not talking about memory loss; I’m talking about keeping up.

When I was new to the substance-abuse field, it was the era of Father Joe Martin, Claudia Black, and Melodie Beattie. Everyone had 30 days in an in-patient facility. A.A. and its spin-offs were regarded as consistently reliable, successful programs for post-treatment referrals.

Managed care had not yet arrived, and personal computers and cell phones were wondrous limited to a precious few. Life without the Internet alone made it a whole different world. I was a young Dr., at least, younger – addictions counselor, and I felt moderately comfortable that I knew what I was doing.

As I look back now, things seemed simpler and less complicated than they are today, in some respects at least.

Then came computers, mobile communications, the Internet, and rapid changes in health care, health insurance, and... the world changed. The old substances – alcohol always predominant – stayed with us, but there were new and different additions. Crack cocaine arrived, followed by rave parties and Brandy. Methamphetamine use increased, and we witnessed a gradual increase of prescription drug abuse to epidemic proportions, fusing a once-unimaginable “popularity” of heroin.

And now we see young people using a proliferation of highly toxic synthetic drugs that mimic marijuana, cocaine, and hallucinogens. I wonder how many more dangerous layers we can pile onto America’s banquet of deadly substances.

Father Martin has since died, and other recovery gurus perhaps believe it is a problem that should be tackled by willpower and without the aid of medication.”

“Facilities are primarily using psychosocial types of treatments,” said Margaret E. Mattson, PhD, a research scientist in the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience at Emory University. “Many treatment facilities believe it is a problem that should be tackled by willpower and without the aid of medication.”

Excerpted from an article at drugfree.org.

Dan Duncan is associate executive director of NCADA. dan@ncada-stl.org

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Study: Only 25 Percent of Treatment Facilities Offer Medications for Alcohol Use Disorder

Although four drugs have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), many patients lack access to evidence-based treatments that can potentially benefit them, the researchers say.

Researchers from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) analyzed national data from a 2012 census of more than 14,000 U.S. substance abuse treatment facilities and found only 25 percent of all facilities offered at least one of the AUD medications and only 5 percent offered all four. The approved medications are naltrexone (available as an oral drug, Revia, and an injectable drug, Viretia), acamprosate (Campral) and disulfiram (Antabuse). Naltrexone can help people reduce heavy drinking. Acamprosate may help maintain abstinence. Disulfiram blocks the breakdown of alcohol by the body, causing unpleasant symptoms such as nausea and flushing of the skin.

“I know that heroin is the nastiest crap on earth. I hate it so much at times,” said Dan Duncan, associate executive director of NCADA. “I wish I could discover a way to wage some sort of agricultural war against poppy cultivation. I know that this field I love, the field of substance abuse, needs to continue to grow as those of us who’ve been at it for decades begin to retire and have some time in our lives to do something other than try to help knock monkeys off other people’s backides. I know that I am grateful that I have become and have remained sober for the bulk of my life, and that I have had the opportunity to help others along the way. And I know that’s a lot, even if I don’t know as much as I once thought I did.”

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Science, Debate and Drama Make for a Lively Symposium

On April 23, NCADA’s 50th Anniversary Symposium brought together experts from across the nation to address the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. Hosted by Saint Louis University and sponsored by Plancorp, the symposium covered a wide spectrum of drug-related issues. After an opening address from David Mineta of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, Mark Kleiman (UCLA) and Kevin Sabet (Smart Approaches to Marijuana) offered practical advice on marijuana decriminalization. Jonathan Gibralter (Frostburg State University) provided nuts-and-bolts strategies for dealing with student drinking. Matthew Johnson (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine) discussed advances in addiction research. New York’s Outside the Wire capped the day’s events with a dramatic reading and an audience discussion. ▶

Participants at Youth Advocacy Conference Witness Senate Approval of Prescription Drug Monitoring Bill

Since 2005 NCADA has provided advocacy training for teens, and then organized trips to Jefferson City to let them put that training into action. This year on April 2, as part of the Youth Advocacy Conference (YAC), the participants met with state legislators to discuss substance abuse issues, and later observed the Missouri legislature in action. Over the past decade, the Jefferson City trips have provided important education on public advocacy. However, the teens rarely have witnessed the legislature voting on or debating sub-

Red Ribbon Training

Red Ribbon Week is the country’s largest anti-drug event, and each year NCADA conducts training for middle school students, supplying materials and ideas to help their schools organize anti-drug programs.

This Year’s Schedule

Sept. 3  ST. CHARLES COUNTY
Sept. 10  ST. LOUIS COUNTY
Sept. 17  FRANKLIN COUNTY
Sept. 24  JEFFERSON COUNTY

Teachers and school administrators who want to learn more about the trainings should contact Lori Krueger at lkrueger@ncada-stl.org or (314) 962-3456 x323.

Tributes & Contributions

February 2015 – April 2015

CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

NCADA Grants recently received

Allergies

Stricker Down Horizon

Cardinals Care

Youth Leadership Programs

Crestroned-Sunset Hills Rotary Club

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, many of the teens watched the Senate approve the measure. This was a triumph, as passage of the measure has long been one of NCADA’s major goals.

Unfortunately, the biggest lesson the teens learned was the need for persistence. The legislative session closed on May 15 without the bill coming to a final vote. Missouri remains the only state without effective prescription drug monitoring. ▶

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Outside the Wire actors read from Eugene O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey into Night. Left to right: Alex Morf, Zach Grenier, Kathleen Chalfant, Colleen Finnegan.